LONG LIVE VINYL

The Trip
BRISTOL
The West Country's vinyl goldmine

+

Kasabian
Pat Nevin
Cream

Classic Album
Neil Young
Harvest

INSIDE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST RECORD FAIR
UTRECHT 2017

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BEGGARS BANQUET
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40 essential dancefloor fillers

THE *new* MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS

+

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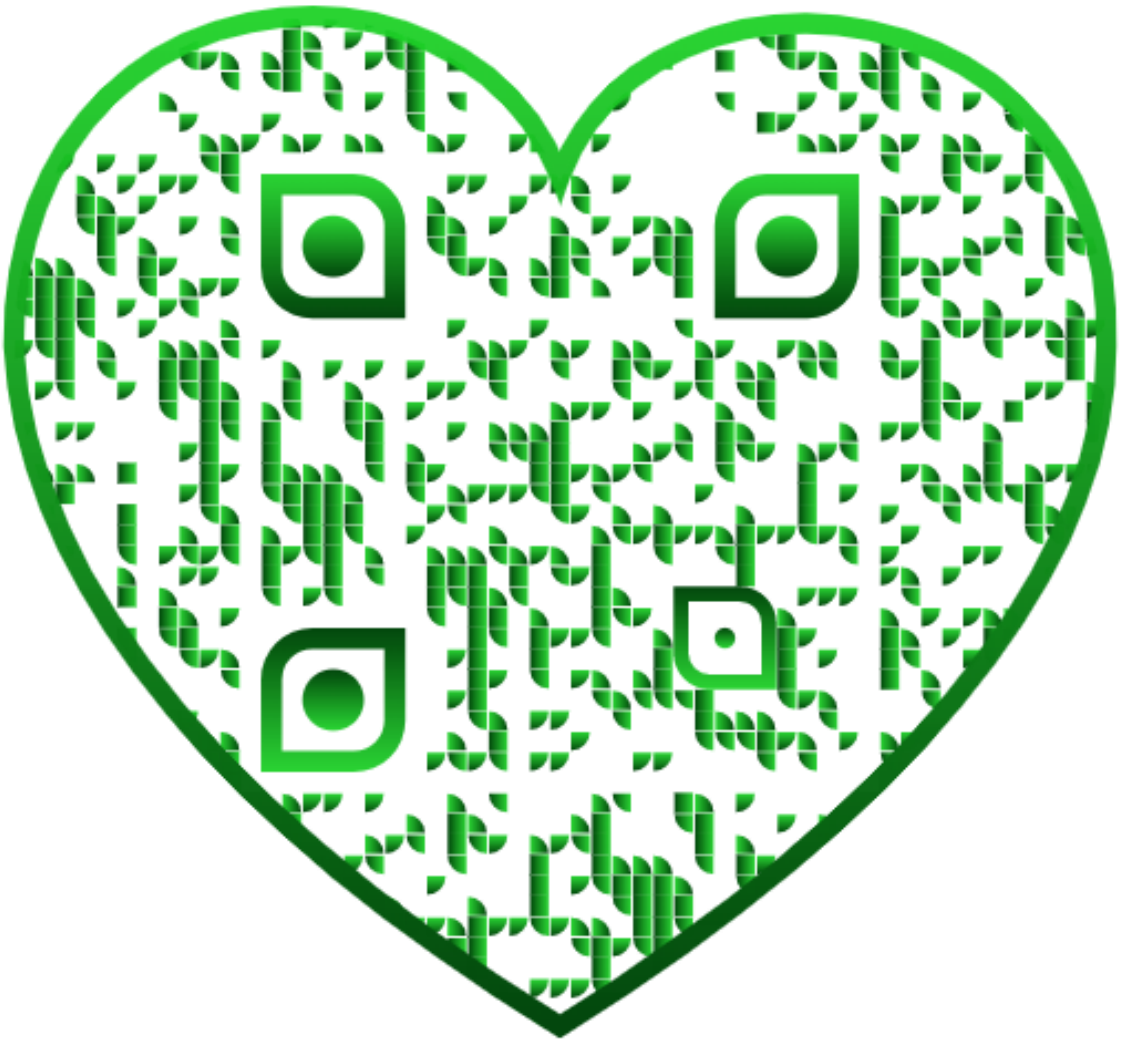

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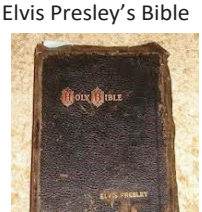

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SOLD £6,785

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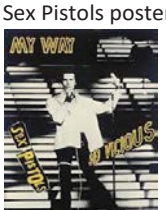

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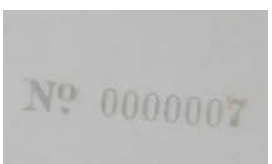

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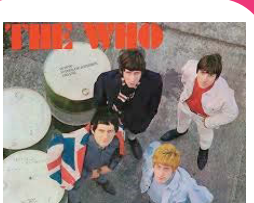

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Welcome...

In his exhaustive and impassioned history of the record industry, *Cowboys And Indies*, Gareth Murphy wrote on the eve of the vinyl boom we're now enjoying: "A tribe of indie diehards is trudging through the desert – surviving on weeds, puddles and their undying belief in music. Today's open field is a place of immense opportunity. When the rivers flow again, the elected will build viaducts, hanging gardens, new temples and new marketplaces."

Those words proved prophetic, and 2016 was the ninth consecutive year of double-digit growth in the UK vinyl industry. More vinyl was sold in 2016 than in any year since 1991, overtaking digital downloads for the first time. In the book, Gareth recalls the challenges from radio, cinema and CDs vinyl faced at separate points in the 20th century. Yet, each time, this most robust format cherished by bands and collectors alike emerged, unscathed, stronger. This month, we're honoured to welcome Gareth on board to write our cover feature – the inside story behind the Vinyl Revolution. If you want to know the truth about our booming industry and what the future holds for vinyl, it's a must-read.

Join us in raising a glass, along with vinyl lovers the world over, to the resurgence of our industry. Long live the revolution!

We also bring you a report from the world's biggest record fair, the Mega Record & CD Fair in Utrecht. I'm writing these words while 30,000 feet above the North Sea, with a bag stuffed full of records. Cas Bosland has presided over this twice-yearly pilgrimage for vinyl addicts from across the globe since 1992 – and it's still growing, with the April show encouraging 525 traders and 25,000 crate diggers to journey to The Netherlands. Ask Cas about the vinyl revival and his response is simple: "Vinyl never went anywhere. We've always believed in vinyl."

Also joining us this issue is our new columnist Simon Raymonde, former Cocteau Twin and founder of Bella Union – one of the UK's most cherished indie labels and an incubator for talent including Fleet Foxes, Father John Misty, Midlake and John Grant. In this world of fleeting five-second attention spans, reality TV and narcissistic social-media saturation, Simon argues that the value of a lovingly engineered vinyl platter cannot be overstated – and that £20 is a fair price for such a work of art. How could we argue?

So, join us in raising a glass, along with Gareth, Cas, Simon and vinyl lovers the world over, to the resurgence of our industry. Long live the revolution!

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

22

CHARGER
RECORDS
CRG-115
Northern Music Corp. (ASCAP)
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(CR-2049)
A & R Fred Darian
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A DIVISION OF CRUSADER RECORDS
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GARAGE ROCK / PSYCH
THE ROOTS OF

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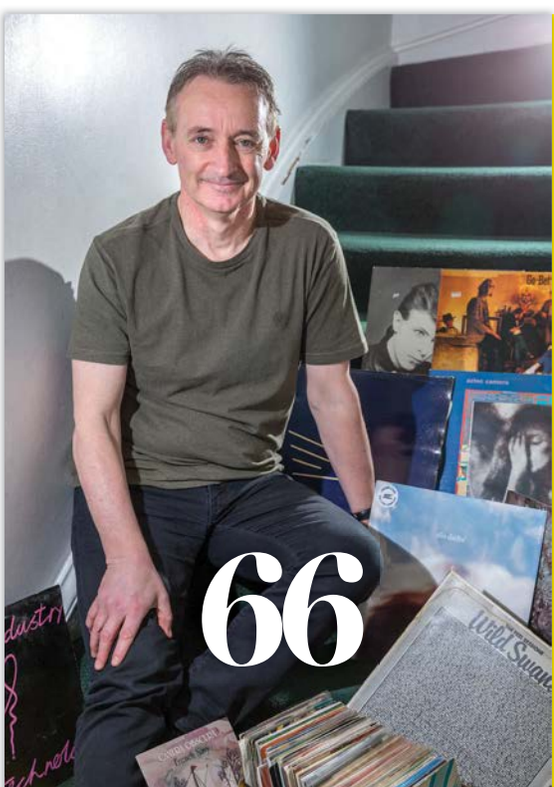
66
Wild Swans

56
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LONG LIVE VINYL

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LONG LIVE VINYL

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Are You Experienced (Backtrack)

Owen Bailey
Brian May + Friends
Star Fleet Project

Andy Cottle
The Beta Band
The Patty Patty Sound

Ian Peel
China Crisis
King In A Catholic Style

Meet our expert contributors...

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins and founded the band Snowbird. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Gareth Murphy
London born but Dublin raised, Gareth Murphy's childhood was enlivened by his father's work in the 1970s and 80s as a pioneer concert promoter. Now based in Paris, he has produced numerous compilations and is the author of *Cowboys And Indies – The Epic History Of The Record Industry*. He has just completed Seymour Stein's memoirs, *Siren Song*, which will be released next year.

Michael Leonard
Michael began writing about music 27 years ago while waiting for a 'proper job'. He's been editor of *Hip Hop Connection* (RIP), *Guitar & Bass* and *Music Radar*, and contributed to *Billboard*, *MOJO*, *Guitar World*, *NME*, *Gibson.com* and more. He's played Jimmy Page's guitars, had Ice-T threaten him and visited the Osbournes for tea...not all on the same day.

Laura K Williams
Laura started her journalism career covering news and features for regional and national newspapers and magazines. She went on to edit *247 Magazine* and has contributed to a wide range of music publications, including *Clash*, *Classic Pop* and *Louder Than War*. As the founder of Figure 8 Festival, she helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.

Huw Price
Huw spent 16 years as a pro audio engineer, working with the likes of David Bowie, Primal Scream and Nick Cave. His book, *Recording Guitar & Bass*, was published in 2002, sparking a career in guitar journalism, and he writes for our sister title *Guitar & Bass*. He has a passion for collecting and restoring classic hi-fi equipment and building preamps and speakers.

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ANTHEM PUBLISHING PPA

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SAVE
THE
DATE
23-24 SEPTEMBER 2017

On the record

RED HOT SGT. PEPPER

The **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** 50th anniversary edition is packed with vinyl delights

As we go to press, news has just broken of the most important vinyl reissue of the year: a 50th anniversary edition of The Beatles' game-changer and era-soundtracker, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, set for release on 26 May.

So, what's new? Firstly, the album has been freshly mixed – not remastered, but mixed once again from the original multitrack tapes – by Giles Martin, son of George, and Sam Okell, an in-house engineer at Abbey Road who's worked on most of The Beatles' reissues of the past 10 years, as well as records by more current acts such as Ellie Goulding and 1D. The *Sgt. Pepper* 2017 Stereo Mix forms Disc One of the two-LP anniversary set. And, for Disc Two, Martin has picked a series of alternate, unreleased takes, matching the original running order to present a fly-on-the-wall insight into the making of *Pepper*.

But vinyl heads may feel rather short-changed, given the multitude of additional material in the accompanying CD boxset. Most notable by their absence are any versions of *Strawberry Fields Forever* or *Penny Lane*, of which there are multiple takes on both the standard two-CD and deluxe CD box versions. However, the vinyl tracks are trailed with such tantalising titles as *With A Little Help From My Friends* [Take 1 – False Start And Take 2 – Instrumental] and *Getting Better* [Take 1 – Instrumental And Speech At The End]. Look out for extensive *Sgt. Pepper's…* coverage and a review in Issue 4 of *Long Live Vinyl*.

GORILLAZ ENCLOSURE

Billed as 'the world's most successful virtual band' (although what about The Archies, or even The Monkees?), the standard edition of Gorillaz' new studio album, *Humanz*, is finally here, via Parlophone. Our advice? Stream it now and wait until the summer for the limited-edition Super Deluxe boxset. Each of the 14 album tracks is awarded its own slice of coloured vinyl and individual sleeve, with an exclusive alternative version on the B-side. The box also includes a 54-page, cloth-bound, foil-blocked hardback book of Gorillaz artwork by Jamie Hewlett.

Cracknell Does Bracknell

Heavenly Recordings are gearing up to release the long-awaited new album from Saint Etienne, *Home Counties*, which will appear on 2 June on cassette as well as vinyl. With 19 new songs dedicated to – and inspired by – life in commuter towns, it's something of a concept album: the trio's first LP since 2012's *Words And Music*.

On songs such as *Whyteleafe*, Saint Etienne display a nostalgia for the home counties, referencing the pre-David Bowie life of David Jones, stuck in a desk job in Bromley. And, as far as *Long Live Vinyl* is concerned, such nostalgic thoughts also hark back to a time when every town had its own record shop. Or maybe two, or even three. "The record shop was the happiest place for me through childhood and into my teens," says Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley. "As significant as libraries were to other people. I could look at the sleeves for hours, and did."

"I remember seeing the illustration on a double album called *The Beat Merchants* in Rhythm Records, Redhill," Bob tells us, "and it clearly represented a secret world. I wasn't wrong – the 60s beat boom may as well have been 50 years previously, rather than just 12 or 13 years. It must have been the same for other people in small towns, not just living in the home counties. All these records were a glimpse into a possible future, outside the town you already knew like the back of your hand."

GROUP THERAPY
Facebook's Identification Of Music group, now up to 45,000 members, could be a more human alternative to Shazam. "The group's sole purpose is for the posting of videos (preferably dark, shaky and with questionable audio quality)," they explain, "and to have the audio from the videos identified. If videos are unavailable, attempts to identify music can also be made based on recordings of members humming, singing, playing or recreating the piece of music."

USHERING IN AN AUDEARA
ON-EAR MONITORING TECHNOLOGY

Australasian doctor James Fielding is ushering in a new era of intelligent headphones with the Audeara – cans that give you a tailored hearing test before playing back any music. After the test, the headphones continually monitor your hearing, to help you discover sounds and notes in music you'd previously missed. "Sometimes, the change is enormous, other times, it's subtle," says Dr Fielding, "but it's always there. Every person hears differently and every person hears differently in each headphone. We tailor the sound for each person based on these two principles." It's been a long journey to bring these to market. Audeara has released four prototype products so far, and their latest move has been to set an 'extended goal' on Kickstarter: a higher target to add extra functionality.

Quote of the month

Quote Of The Month comes from Elton John, who was named as the first Record Store Day Legend ahead of this year's event on 22 April. Who are we to disagree with his assessment of the sonic qualities of vinyl when compared to other (lesser) formats? "It does sound better. I know people say it doesn't, but it does. I've been around long enough to know. I've been in so many studios, I've made so many records. It just sounds better."

ECO-CUBES
US furniture house Way Basics' Vinyl Record Album Storage Cubes are made for holding approximately 50 albums and are also environmentally friendly. Simple to assemble and stack, they're made from zBoard, a much more eco-friendly version of MDF that's made "almost entirely (99 per cent) from post-consumer recycled paper." www.waybasics.com has further info.

BAMBOO DECKING
This has to be the perfect turntable for *A Mange-Tout Far*, the album cut out of wood by Wild Willy Barrett's French Connection featured in *On The Record* last issue: the new Pebbles TA-0.5 from Tri-Art is made completely out of bamboo. Yes, that's the deck, the platter and the tone arm, all made from what they are quick to remind us is one of the fastest-growing plants in the world.

WHEEL DEAL
NEW ARM-AND-NEEDLE-FREE DECK

Wheel is a new turntable design that turns the art of playing a record on its head – literally. You place your vinyl on a turntable and that's it. There's no arm to move or needle to see (or break). Instead, all playing and moving parts are hidden away below. The only downside, of course, is you're left to look at Side B of an album while Side A plays. But let's not niggle – this beautifully minimalist design has already raised almost 500,000 Euros in start-up funding."I've always admired the technical marvel of gramophone records," explains Greet van den Berg of Wheel's design team, Miniot. "And for years, I wondered why the ritual of record playing wasn't more elegant. The CD made this even worse, and streaming music definitely anaesthetised the experience. Thank God the record got a second chance. With Wheel, we aim to honour vinyl and bring Emile Berliner's creation full circle."

Bill Bernstein MED

FOREIGNER AT 40

Do you want to know what the new Foreigner album is? Do you want us to show you? The band celebrate their birthday in style…

40 years and 40 hit singles: what better reasons could there be to compile your back catalogue? And what better title than *40* (especially when it references one of your biggest albums, 1981's *4?*). Thus, we have a new career-spanning compilation from Foreigner, complete with a new track, *Give My Life For Love*, and a re-recording of 1987's *I Don't Want To Live Without You*.

It's released at the end of May via Rhino Records, and includes *The Flame Still Burns*, the title track from a vinyl-only EP released last year. The vinyl edition does somewhat disrupt the philosophy of the whole '40' title, however, by dropping 17 tracks so it fits on two platters. So, was it hard to decide which songs to drop? "Yes, it is always difficult and frustrating," founder member and guitarist Mick Jones told *Long Live Vinyl*. "Maybe we should release a 'best of the unchosen' at some point?"

When talking to Foreigner about vinyl, we're duty-bound to ask about the 'F-block' edition of *I Want To Know What Love Is*, possibly the biggest-selling picture disc of the 80s. "I think when picture discs first arrived, they were a promotional tool and I thought they were kind of 'cute', in a way," Mick tells us. "With the passing of time, it seems that everything ends up being an artform these days. I believe I still have the (1978) picture disc of the single *Blue Morning, Blue Day* from our second album, *Double Vision*."

OUT AND ABOUT

We've been on the road again! On the weekend of 8-9 April we ventured to Utrecht for the incredible Mega Record & CD Fair, as featured this issue and in-depth on our website and social media. On 20 May, we'll be at Electric Bear Brewing in Bath sponsoring the latest record fair from the team at V Is For Vinyl. It's billed, mouthwateringly, as "six hours of non-stop vinyl digging at the heart of an award-winning craft brewery". Also, a big thank you is due to Winchester Hi-Fi in Hampshire for acting as the *Long Live Vinyl* equivalent of the *Top Gear* test track and setting up the perfect environment for this month's turntable reviews.

GROOVE SELECTA

While you could make the case that every record label is 'fan driven', that's the MO of a new imprint from Warners, called Run Out Groove. Each month, they come up with a shortlist of three releases, but only one will be pressed – and it's up to fans and customers to vote for which one that will be. Not only that, but the winning record is pressed according to the quantity of preorders received during a 30-day window.

Refined Oil

Rock activists Midnight Oil have been hard at work remastering their back catalogue for *The Complete Vinyl Collection Boxset*, which is out this month ahead of two live shows at the Eventim Apollo.

It's an authoritative set, with 11 studio LPs and two 12" EPs. Each disc has been remastered from the original tapes by one of the go-to mastering engineers of the Antipodes, Steve Smart, who has worked with a veritable *Who's Who* of Australian talent, including Crowded House, The Living End, Icehouse and Empire Of The Sun.

"I think we've made the vinyls quite long," Midnight Oil's lead singer Peter Garrett tells *Long Live Vinyl*, "even adding songs to albums rather than taking them off, and going against the 20-minutes-a-side philosophy. *Earth And Sun And Moon* now runs to 28 minutes on one side – it's a bit more crackly, but that's all part of the charm."

Can Recycled

Can release a triple-vinyl singles collection on Mute Records on 16 June, the first time all of the group's singles have been gathered together in one place. And The Singles even goes so far as to include their non-album 7"s, such as 1971's *mythical Turtles Have Short Legs*. "Can's music is timeless," Mute Records founder Daniel Miller tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "When I first heard them, it sounded like nothing I'd heard before, and went completely against the grain of what was popular at the time. Its minimalism, its repetition and its vocals… so far ahead of its time that, even now, it sounds contemporary and modern. They're probably one of the most influential bands," he tells us. "Every musician that comes to visit Mute's offices – techno, guitarists, all genres – they all ask us for Can's records."

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

In his first monthly column, the Bella Union boss asks whether £20 for a vinyl album represents good value for money…

We run a little vinyl shop in the Lanes of Brighton, my wife and I, selling only Bella Union stuff. The shop is 150 sq ft, with just enough room to swing a cat. NB, animal lovers concerned that Bella Union measures its floorspace by grabbing a kitten by the tail and whirling it around the room, do not fret. That phrase is from ye olde 17th Century sea-faring days and refers to the lack of space on the main deck for a good flogging with the cat o' nine tails. Don't worry, we love cats. And dogs. We even have a shop dog…

But this is all a diversion from the serious business on my mind, which is 'the cost of vinyl' – and the hot air it generates among those of us who love buying music that is mysteriously pressed onto the analogue sound-storage medium known as vinyl.

If we agree that, on average, a vinyl LP is £20, then for all those who moan about the cost, we must consider other items that we buy for £20. Of course, the cost tells only part of the story, as the other important thing to ask is to do with the quality and the lifespan of the product. Getting too deep into how long it took to actually make the music, and the cost of recording, mixing and mastering – whether it be with an orchestra or in a bedroom – is not part of this equation, and while those processes are crucial to its ultimate 'value', let's not go there right now!

Let's assume that, with reasonable care, a vinyl purchase will last at least 25 years; to be able to say with 100 per cent certainty that £20 is very good value, we have to compare it to similarly priced things – and the lifespan of those purchases. So, I went through my receipts and found a bunch of other things I'd paid £20 for. When you've read to the bottom, if you still feel £20 is too much, you can visit the shop and we'll sell you a £3 cassette – or you can use our listening post for free for a bit.

Receipt #1: iPhone charger cable and plug £39.98 These will be lost or will break within six months. I could buy two albums that will last forever (I'm 54, so I ain't living more than 25 years, alright?) and have hours of listening pleasure, or I could buy an iPhone cable and plug that will give me no pleasure and will get chewed by the dog. ONE NIL TO ME.

Receipt #2: 2x flat white coffees, 2x scrambled eggs on toast with mushrooms, 2x superfood smoothie things, 2x bananas £23.76 Coffee was pretty terrible, eggs were dry, smoothies were okay but warm… In 20 minutes, it was all over – very little pleasure derived, no cultural benefits. My stomach hurt quite a lot in fact, and I only started to feel better once the new Thundercat LP arrived, and that was a way better purchase than the breakfast. 2-0!

The joy that is passed on to the artist, record stores and the consumer is worth more than anything £20 can buy

Receipt #3: 1,500x ladybirds £19.99 Because they are expert at looking after my plants, and even though their average lifespan is two to three years, this is almost as good an investment as an LP. I'll concede this one, 2-1 – though it may have been offside.

Receipt #4: 1x Diptyque candle £23.99 These luxurious candles with sophisticated smells – not like the ones in Tesco, where one whiff gives you a migraine and an asthma attack – are great if you have a dog prone to emitting pungent odours when you're sitting down for a relaxing evening. My old way of dealing with it – lifting my T-shirt over my nose and breathing in my own 'essence' – has flaws, especially after a stressful day. The price of £23.99 is exorbitant for something made of a vegetable/paraffin wax mix, but the fragrances are mostly lovely. Candles burn through in a few days, though, and if you buy one vinyl and one candle a week, the A Tribe Called Quest LP wins hands-down on value. 3-1.

Receipt #5: 1x umbrella and gloves £17.55 I bought these two months ago. I left the umbrella in Norway, and I lost one glove to a dog. Not mine, annoyingly; it was a 'friend' of his, who saw it peeping out of my pocket and jumped up and ran off into the bushes with it. When I got over to where he was rifling through some old fried-chicken boxes I saw the glove, but it was sopping wet, only had four fingers and was touching a pile of dog mess. Clearly the vinyl I bought that week, Mind Over Mirrors' *Undying Colour,* was a more edifying purchase than the umbrella and gloves, which I will have to replace.

Something that takes two to three months to make, is produced in a mystifying way involving aluminium, hydraulic presses, steam, silver, nickel, PVC and no end of antique manufacturing techniques and machines, is a kind of alchemy. When this beautiful shiny disc is slipped into a cardboard sleeve, one of engineering's greatest achievements is complete. The joy passed on to the artist (I've not met one whose face didn't light up when presented with the first vinyl), record stores and the consumer is worth more than anything £20 can buy. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins and founded the independent record label Bella Union***

ALL THE PIE

Humble Pie's entire back catalogue is re-engineered and re-released, with radically improved sound, in a comprehensive new vinyl boxset

The early-70s heyday of one of rock's first supergroups is celebrated on 2 June with the release of Humble Pie's functionally titled *The A&M Vinyl Boxset 1970-1975*. The set gathers all seven albums recorded by the quartet of Steve Marriott, Peter Frampton, Greg Ridley and Jerry Shirley. That's 1970's *Humble Pie*, '71's *Rock On* and performance *Rockin' The Fillmore*, '72's *Smokin'*, the double album from 1973, *Eat It*, 1974's *Thunderbox* and finally, the US version of 1975's *Street Rats*. "The toughest part was knowing whether the end result would sound as good as I knew it could," Shirley explains to *Long Live Vinyl*. "As I hadn't worked with sound engineer Kevin Reeves before, I had no idea whether he'd be able to fix the terrible sound problems that occurred when we mixed *Eat It* originally and cut it to disc. But he did such a brilliant job, all my fears were alleviated… My personal two favourites would have to be *Rock On* and *Smokin'*."

Marc Pinder

HEYWARD BOUND

The crowdfunding campaign for Nick Heyward's new solo album, *Woodland Echoes* is nearing its target. The album will be available on a limited run of 500 vinyl copies, each signed and with a download code. "Vinyl records changed my life," Nick tells us. "They fascinated me. They're 12 by 12: they're before things got smaller. They look and feel beautiful… LPs looked and felt substantial, especially a gatefold. And if you released a gatefold I always thought it meant you had a lot to offer as an artist."

Rundgren Reduced

Iconic US prog-rocker Todd Rundgren releases his new album *White Knight* on Cleopatra Records in May, though the vinyl's been curtailed from the artist's original 15-track vision down to 12 tracks, a decision that was out of his control, he tells us. "I never get involved in the marketing of my records," Rundgren says, "so the *White Knight* vinyl release was a label decision…" "I guess it just reflects a kind of 'de-evolution' in how the audience sees music delivery," Rundgren adds, perhaps rather whimsically, as this is the man who hosted the first interactive TV concert in 1978 and came out with some of music's first downloads and releases, especially for 90s interactive formats such as CDi.

Avatar Blues

James Horner's soundtrack for Avatar sees its first-ever release on limited-edition blue vinyl

For James Cameron's *Avatar*, James Horner delivered one of his most iconic soundtracks. It's set for its first-ever release on vinyl, but get in there quick, as there'll be a limited first edition of 5,000 numbered copies on blue vinyl. This and all editions will be on a 180-gram two-LP set in gatefold sleeve with a six-page insert, the latest release from the Music On Vinyl label's *At The Movies* series. "As well as OST film titles, our *At The Movies* range also includes original scores for television," MOV's Mike Gething tells us. "Particularly popular are titles like *Game Of Thrones*, *Band Of Brothers* and *Stranger Things*. We've also released a few games titles: *Warcraft* did well, as did *The Order: 1886*. Fans of the series cross between collectors who follow particular composers, and those who see the special-edition vinyl as a 'must buy' because they collect a particular film franchise, especially the classics."

The range's top five-selling titles to date? *Batman V Superman* is No. 1, closely followed by *Titanic*, and then *Natural Born Killers*, *Game Of Thrones* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*. But they encourage fans to email suggestions and consider all kinds of soundtrack projects.

nriko.com

SWANS SONGS ON VINYL

As experimental US rockers Swans head out on a major tour – the highlight of which will be a show at London's Roundhouse at the end of May, with special guest Thurston Moore – Mute Records in the UK and Young Gods in the US will simultaneously release a new edition of Swans' 1995 album, *The Great Annihilator*, on double vinyl – their first release on vinyl for decades. A bonus download code will provide access to *Drainland*, founder Michael Gira's mid-90s debut solo album.

Gira describes the recent discovery of DATs and cassettes from the *…Annihilator* sessions as "a revelation of great sonic effect", and it proved to be the catalyst for this new edition. "I lived in a tent in a mosquito-infested studio right next to Cabrini Green in Chicago for something like three months, rarely leaving," he remembers. "Band members came and went, and somehow we crafted this thing into what it became…"

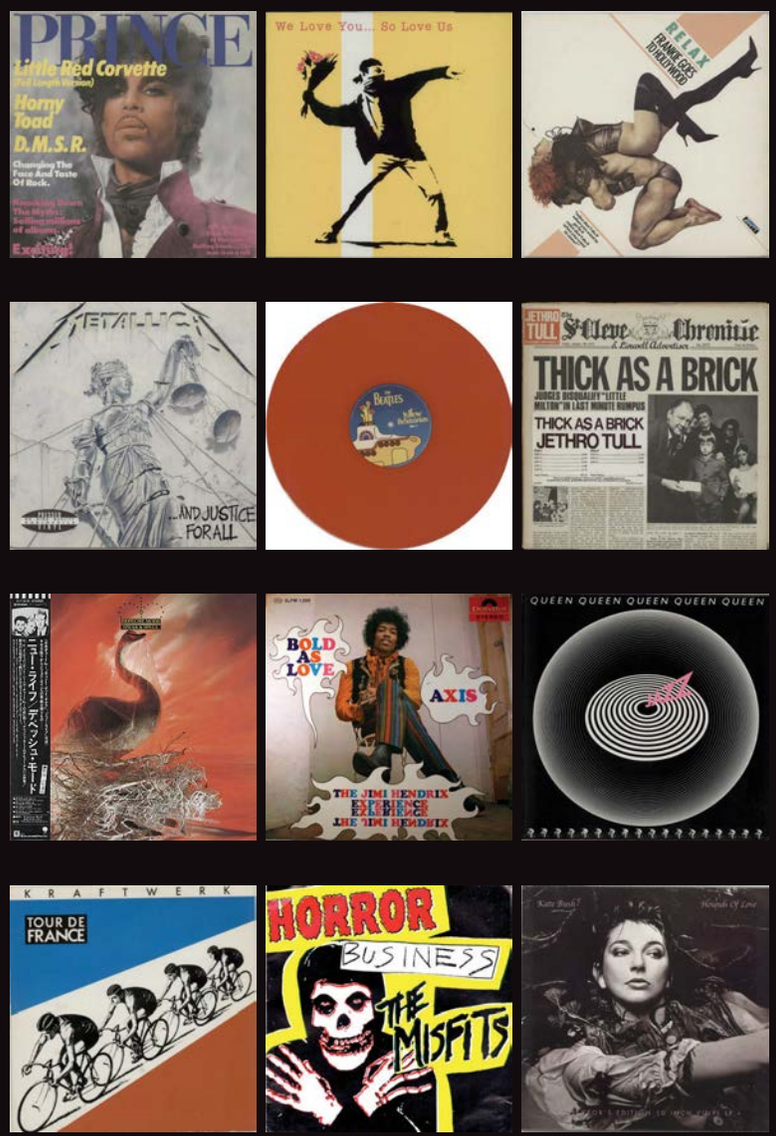
LIFT FOO EXPERIENCE
One of John Peel's favourite groups in his later years – the DJ invited them to record three radio sessions in just five months – Lift To Experience have released two new editions of their debut album, *The Texas-Jerusalem Crossroads*. There's a double red-and-blue coloured vinyl and a 1,000-copy boxset containing the original and new mixes of the album, their debut EP (on vinyl for the first time) and a *Peel Session* from 2001, plus a large-format photo/lyric book. Also look out for a very limited edition: an accidental mispressing that plays tracks by the Foo Fighters!

long live vinyl

the 991.com team have been buying and selling vinyl for over 30 years.

we are always looking for mint condition vinyl, LPs, EPs and 45s plus CDs and pop music memorabilia

from the mainstream to the obscure: 80s, 70s, 60's pop and rock prog, psych, blues, folk & jazz



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On The Radar

HOLLY MACVE

The sounds of Nashville, via Galway, Yorkshire and Brighton…

If you listen to only one new vocalist this month, make it Holly Macve. The 21-year-old's debut album, *Golden Eagle*, released in March on Bella Union, showcases a spellbinding, powerfully affecting voice that sounds as though it was forged in Nashville.

Holly was in fact born in Ireland, raised in Yorkshire, and discovered by Bella boss Simon Raymonde playing in a bar in Brighton. Yet her stunningly beautiful country laments, towering vibrato and mesmeric head voice evoke American country greats such as Tammy Wynette and Gillian Welch – as well as contemporary alt-country talents from across the pond such as Sharon Van Etten.

That country influence is a product of a childhood spent in a family of musicians and the presence of Holly's mum's vinyl collection, which was well stocked with Bob Dylan and classic blues albums. "Ever since I remember, there were always people playing music around me, and so it was always a very natural thing for me to pursue," says Holly. "My mum played a lot of Irish fiddle music and blues tunes, and my grandad was a classical composer.

"I was still a teenager when writing a lot of the songs on *Golden Eagle*, moving into my twenties. For some reason, I've always struggled with growing up and the passing of time, and I think that was a theme I subconsciously explored a lot on the album.

"I never sit down and try to write a song about any particular themes, though… usually, the lyrics are just based around thoughts that have been swimming round my mind and I'm not really in control of when or how they come out. I like that about songwriting – sometimes you end up learning stuff about yourself that you never knew."

The first single from *Golden Eagle*, *No One Has The Answers*, has been racking up plenty of radio airplay, and when we speak to Holly on the eve of a short UK tour, she's just returned from a whistlestop trip to the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas. Clearly, she's in demand.

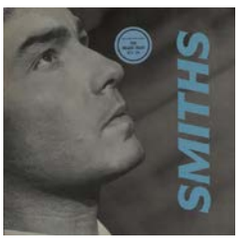
"It was pretty mental… I played around nine shows in four days this year," she laughs. "You never know quite what to expect when it comes to sound and venues, so you sort of have to just roll with it and have fun. I love Austin as a city, too, so it was great to hang out there again."

The release of *Golden Eagle* after a fairly lengthy gestation period was something of a cathartic experience for Holly.

"I definitely do feel some sort of relief," she tells us. "Some of the songs on the record are two or three years old, so it's quite nice to be able to finally let go of them in a sense and share them with other people. The record took a while to finish, but I'm glad we spent that extra time with it, as it was important for me to live with the songs and get to know them as much as possible before putting them out there." ●

CRATE DIGGING WITH... Echobelly

With fans of their 90s work including Morrissey, Madonna and REM, the return of Echobelly is long overdue. 26 May sees the release of their first album in 11 years, *Anarchy And Alchemy*. For a sense of the influences going into it, their sixth album, guitarist and founder **Glenn Johansson** picked 10 of his favourite singles and albums…



THE SMITHS
HATFUL OF HOLLOW

"This was the first Smiths album that I bought, and it was a game changer for me musically. An album of John Peel sessions and B-sides that gave you a great introduction to the band."

LED ZEPPELIN
III

"One of my schoolfriends' older brothers would play this album and it inspired me to play the guitar. I love the mixture of acoustic and heavier material. The acoustic songs have an eastern and Celtic vibe… which I love."

CHIC
RISQUÉ

"It's the kind of album that makes you smile. Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards' finest moment."

MILES DAVIS
KIND OF BLUE

"This is my favourite jazz album of all time – I never get tired of it. If you were to introduce someone to jazz, this would be the album."

BOB DYLAN
INFIDELS

"My first Bob Dylan album. It's got Mark Knopfler, Mick Taylor and best of all, the rhythm section, Sly And Robbie. It's probably not most people's favourite Dylan album, but I love the atmosphere on it and every single song is great."

BLONDIE
PARALLEL LINES

"Just the perfect pop album."

DEEP PURPLE
MADE IN JAPAN

"A live album recorded in 1972. This is the best-sounding live album I've ever heard, there are no overdubs or trickery added, it's exactly how the band sounded. The musicianship is staggering! A pure joy to listen to."

SEX PISTOLS
NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS

"A really great rock 'n' roll record, never mind a punk record. It's recorded at Wessex Studios, where we recorded a lot of our B-sides. The studio's no longer there, but I remember it had an incredible vibe to it."

ANANDA SHANKAR
ANANDA SHANKAR

"An album from 1970 that I found in a record store recently. He's a nephew of the late great Ravi Shankar. It has a fantastic version of *Jumping Jack Flash* with a kind of cheesy 60s feel."

THE BEATLES
ABBEY ROAD

"I love this record for the sound of it. It was the first time that they used the new eight-track EMI desk; before, they were using two or four-track or two four-track desks joined together. It's incredibly warm and rich. Especially *Come Together*."

On The Radar

CIGARETTES AFTER SEX

The slow-burning debut from these Texan dream popsters is no anticlimax

It's been a long wait for the eponymous debut LP from Cigarettes After Sex, the ambient-pop outfit led by Greg Gonzalez. Founded in El Paso, Texas in 2008 and since relocated to Brooklyn, the band's debut EP dropped in 2012, with three singles following in 2015 and 2016.

The band have been through several line-ups along the way, but the nine-year gestation period for their first album is evidence that you can't rush artistic brilliance, as the debut, released on 9 June, is a beautifully absorbing cinematic record that befits the band's name perfectly. There are echoes of Angelo Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks* theme and Mazzy Star in the absorbing, hazy, widescreen compositions and in the heady, romantic air that hangs over proceedings.

"It's a great feeling to finally have a long work that I'm happy about," says Gonzalez. "It was a very rare occasion for me to truly finish an album before. I usually worked in EP and single formats for the longest time. The band has been host to quite a long history of different players and collaborators over the years. I met the keyboard player, Phillip Tubbs, in El Paso. I met the drummer, Jacob Tomsky and bassist, Randy Miller, in Brooklyn. I thought they sounded fantastic together and were exactly what the music needed."

Nothing's Gonna Hurt You Baby, from the *I.* EP, has become an internet smash, racking up 50 million plays on YouTube. "I was definitely surprised by the attention it got," says Gonzalez. "Mostly since it took so long to happen. In my hometown, I'd put out songs and they'd dissolve without much notice. I'd sort of just gotten used it, so to see a song be welcomed for once was like seeing Halley's Comet."

Gonzalez acknowledges the influence of California's Mazzy Star on the band's sound, in the shape of the gorgeous *Fade Into You* from 1993's *So Tonight That I Might See*. "*Fade Into You* was definitely a huge influence. There's quite a few influences on the group, where I was mainly influenced by one song by a band rather than their catalogue, which is the case with Mazzy Star. That song is worth 1,000 songs to me in terms of its beauty… Others were *Sweet Jane* by the Cowboy Junkies, *Katy Song* by Red House Painters, *I Love How You Love Me* by The Paris Sisters, *Famous Blue Raincoat* by Leonard Cohen and *Floating Into The Night* by Julee Cruise."

The move from Texas to the East Coast proved pivotal in his band's rise to prominence, but did nothing for Gonzalez's record collection. "I had to give away a lot of my record collection before I moved," he says. "At the moment, I just have two of my favourite records, *La Question* by Françoise Hardy and *Sea Of Dreams* by Nelson Riddle.

"I'd like to at least have my Top 10 favourite albums on vinyl," he says. "It's definitely one of the most important formats. There's a romance about listening to an album on vinyl that ties in to what we're doing quite nicely." ●

VINYL BROADWAY RUN

Analog Spark is a new audiophile imprint from one of New York's coolest and most creative indie labels, Razor & Tie. Launching in January with a 50th Anniversary reissue – on vinyl and SACD – of *The Sound of Music*, they've readied three deep-archive releases for a new generation of listeners.

There are special editions of *South Pacific* and *Gypsy* (the first stereo recording of Ethel Merman) from the 40s and a new edition of the 1970 musical, *Company*. All three have been mastered from the original tapes by Ryan Smith at Sterling Sound – who last year worked on remastering John Lennon and Yoko Ono's sound-art enigma *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins* for the Secretly Canadian label – and are housed in old-school Stoughton 'tip-on' jackets.

BOUNTIFUL MAIDEN

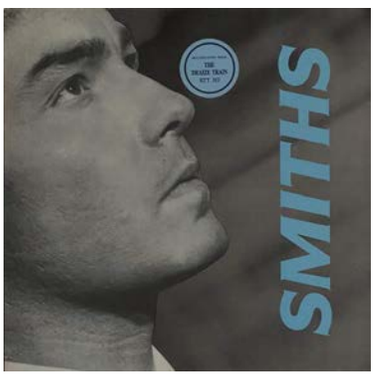
Iron Maiden have gone back to the 2015 remasters of their back catalogue for a series of 12 new pressings. 19 May sees *No Prayer For The Dying, Fear Of The Dark, The X Factor* and *Virtual XI*. Then it's 23 June for *Brave New World, Rock In Rio, Dance Of Death* and *A Matter Of Life And Death*. Then on 21 July, it's *The Final Frontier* and three live sets. There's also a Collectors Box, with the first two LPs and empty slots for the rest.

CLARIFICATION

In Issue Two's *Your Most Valuable Vinyl* feature in association with 991.com, the record prices were incorrect. The correct price of Depeche Mode's *Music For The Masses* is £200, Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* £250, Pet Shop Boys' *Discography* £40 and The Cure's *Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me* is £95.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE VINYL

Our friends at 991.com trawl through the crates and bring us four more prized collectables. All values are for mint or near-mint condition copies



THE SMITHS

PANIC 12" AND STICKER SHEET

Rare 1986 UK limited-edition three-track 12" vinyl single in hype-stickered picture sleeve with blue die-cut inner and labels, plus the all-important bonus sheet of nine 'Panic', 'Hang The DJ' and 'Smiths' stickers RTT193

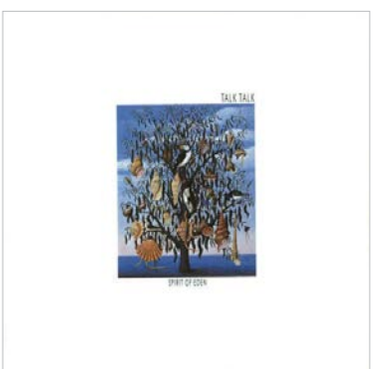
Value **£50 to £75**

MOTÖRHEAD

NO REMORSE (LEATHER SLEEVE)

1984 UK limited-edition 24-track compilation double-vinyl LP in a special silver-and-red-embossed black-leather sleeve, with the original narrative/picture/lyric inners. As it says on the back – Play Loud! MOTOR1

Value **£50 to £75**



TALK TALK

SPIRIT OF EDEN

1988 UK first-press six-track LP complete with lyric inner and picture sleeve. A departure from the early synth-pop incarnation of the band, this album split critical opinion at the time, but is now regarded as a mature, at times almost jazz-like, work of sheer brilliance. PCSD105

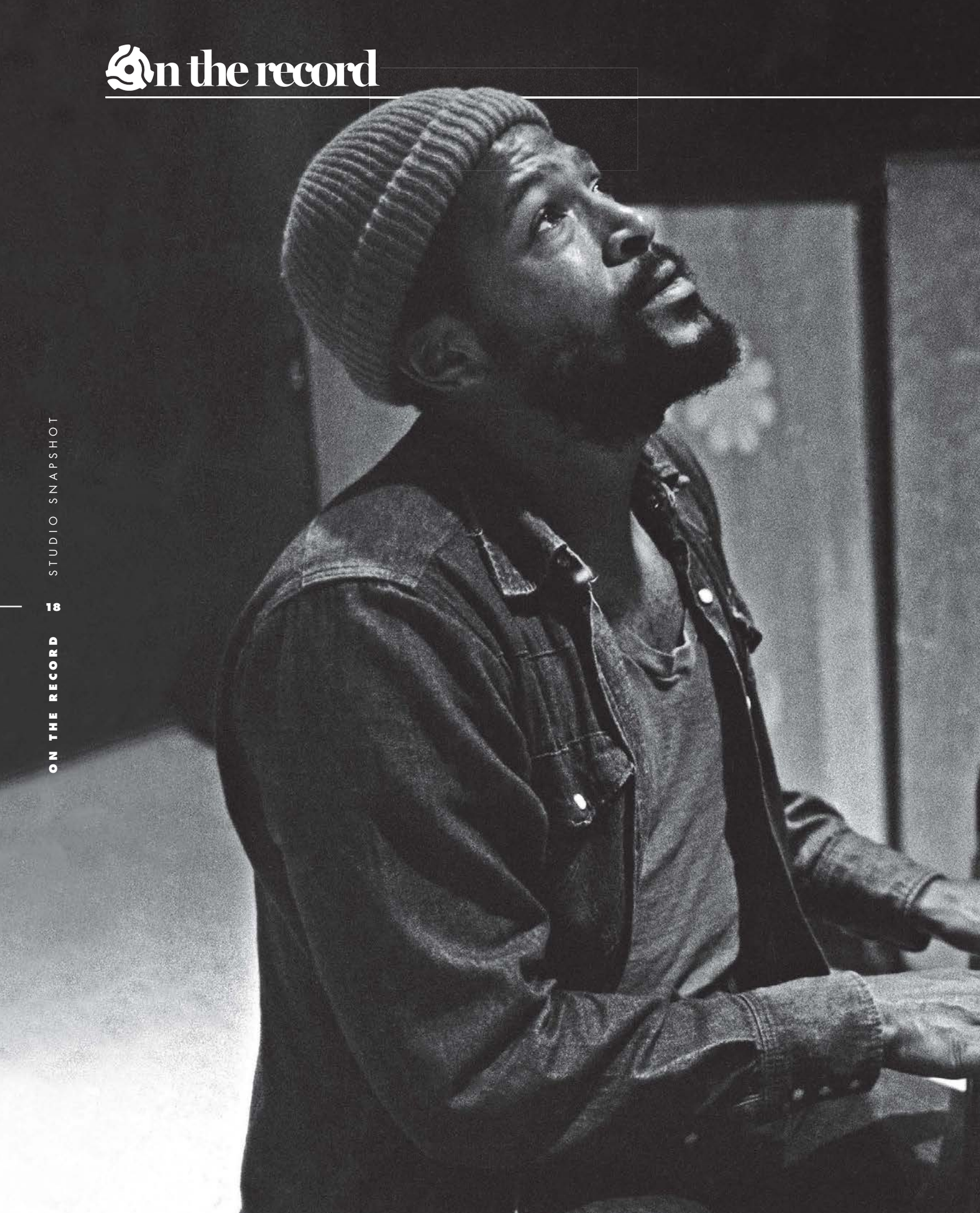
Value **Up to £50**

QUEEN

QUEEN ROCKS

1997 UK first-issue limited-edition 18-track double-LP compilation pressed on heavyweight vinyl in a hype-stickered Deluxe gatefold picture sleeve with lyrics inside, complete with tracklisting inners. A 90s compilation that wasn't snapped up on vinyl at the time.

Value **Up to £100**



STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

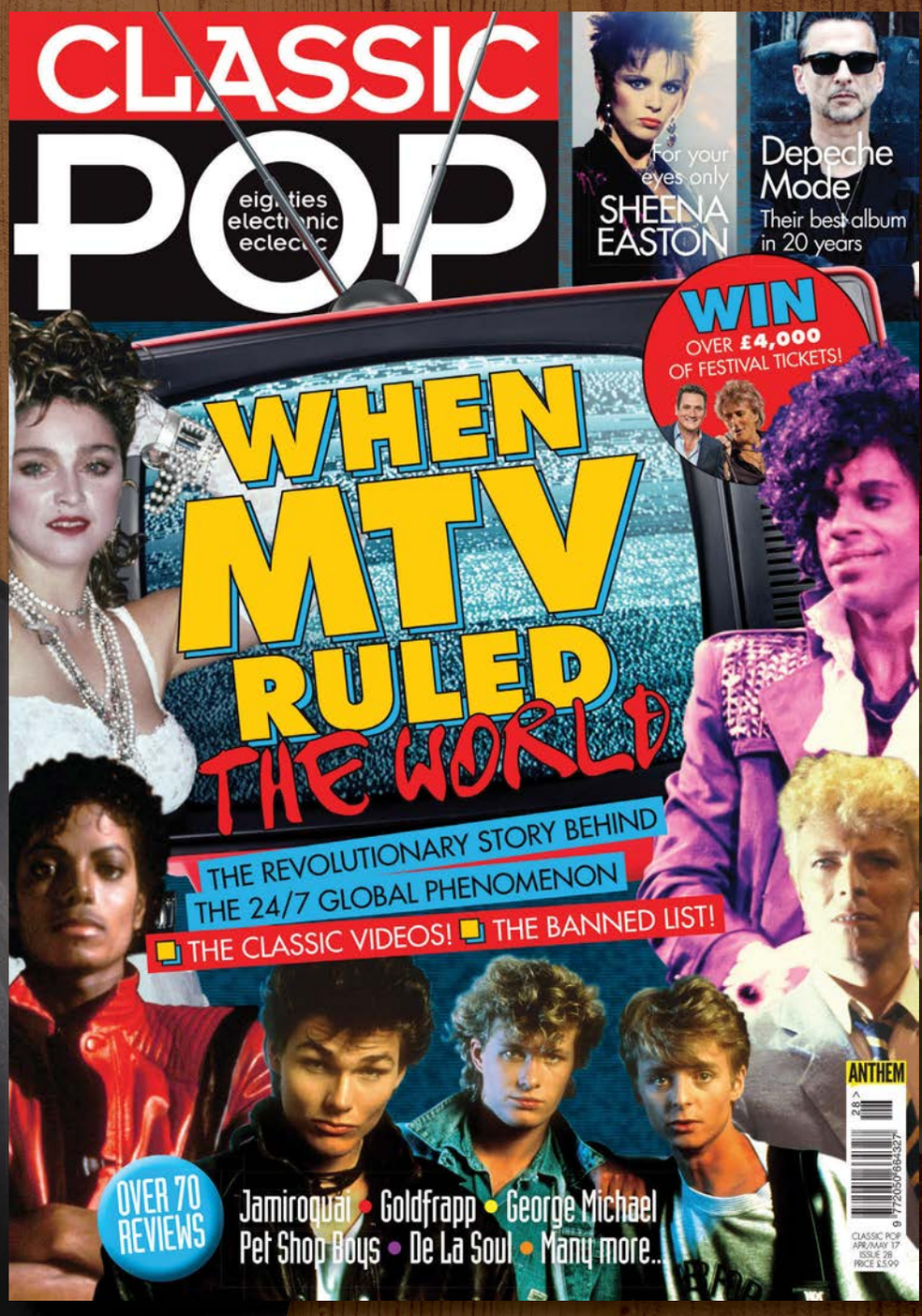
MARVIN GAYE

Golden West Studios, Hollywood

Captured by photographer Jim Britt, this image, shot at Hollywood's Golden West Studios, shows the legendary soul singer and jewel in the crown of Motown at the piano during the recording sessions for *Let's Get It On*. Having gained more control from Motown during the negotiation of a $1 million contract that saw him become the highest-paid black artist in the world, Gaye set out on a recording that was a departure from the established Motown sound and would become his most commercially successful album.

Recording sessions for *Let's Get It On* began in the label's Studio B in Detroit, before moving on to Golden West in Los Angeles, where Gaye enlisted sessioneers The Funk Brothers. *Let's Get It On* explored themes of love, spirituality, the demise of his marriage and sexuality – cloaked in the darkness of childhood abuse at the hands of his father. Released in 1973, Gaye's 13th studio album spent 61 weeks on the Billboard Chart, peaking at No. 2 before being toppled by The Rolling Stones' *Goats Head Soup*.

ON SALE NOW!



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IAN PEEL'S
LINER NOTES

Don't judge a book by its cover, they say. But some of the best moments in my collecting career have arisen from the opposite approach. So, if there's a digger's credo, it might be: if you like the look of a sleeve, take a leap of faith

Have you ever bought a record based solely on sleeve-attraction alone? Or even bought one for purely aesthetic value? "I actually have framed record sleeves from local thrift shops – that I collect and put on my walls – from artists I've never heard of," Nick Heyward told me, during an interview this month for our news section.

"To me, they don't even have to be classics. That's the wonder of a great album cover. It's a piece of art in itself: it sometimes doesn't matter about the music. And they don't have to be impressive or expensive works of art. I like The Feelies' *Crazy Rhythms* album sleeve for that. I love its simplicity."

Personally, I can say that I wouldn't own any records by Angie Giles – including the brilliant Driza-Bone Mix of her 1992 non-hit *Submerge* – were it not for a visual rather than musical thirst.

In the early 1990s, I was an avid collector of Island Records' Sense imprint. Their output couldn't really have been much more diverse: it featured Massive Attack-influencers Startled Insects one minute and the post-Madchester indie of Helter Skelter the next. But all of their releases were bonded by fantastic design, sleeves and packaging.

It was such a strong visual identity that once, when I was browsing new releases, I came across the debut single by The Main Thing. I'd never heard of the group and had no idea what their music sounded like, but it looked like a Sense release… It felt like a Sense release. There was just one problem, though – it wasn't on the Sense label. The Main Thing's sleeve had that similarly exotic, rather otherworldly quality that I saw in all Sense releases.

It turns out that Nick Heyward knows the feeling all too well. "I loved Steely Dan's *Pretzel Logic*," he says, "even though when it came out, I didn't know what a pretzel was. It was very exotic to me. Exotic from the land of TV and cinema. And when you play the music and wonder why they chose the image to go with it, it just leaves you stuck in a state of wonder and bewilderment and 'why-ness'. That's why I love albums – because you don't know why and sometimes neither does the artist… That's the wonder of art and self-expression."

> ***"I actually have framed record sleeves from local thrift shops – that I collect and put on my walls – from artists I've never heard of"***
>
> Nick Heyward

It was that sense of wonder (though without the Sense logo) that made me take a leap of faith and buy The Main Thing's *My Lover's Keeper*. And I loved it. It turned out to be their one and only release, though careful studying of the credits pointed to Angie Giles.

And this, of course, is the reason why I wasted no time picking up her *Submerge* 12" when I happened to come across it on the racks a year later. I have both of those records to this day, despite the ongoing downsizing of my vinyl collection. And both of them are testaments to the potential and power of judging records by their covers. ●

INSIDE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST RECORD FAIR

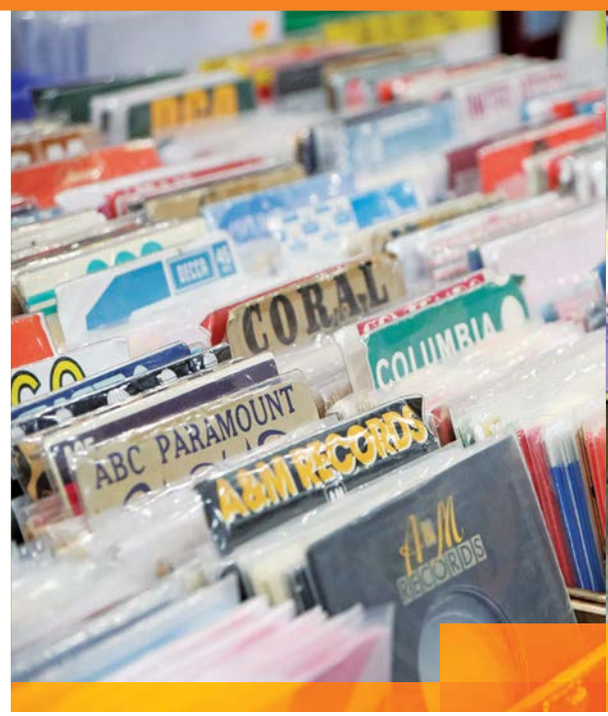
Gary Walker flies to The Netherlands to join 25,000 crate diggers at vinyl's Greatest Show On Earth – and tries to set a new record for the most albums ever fitted into one piece of hand luggage

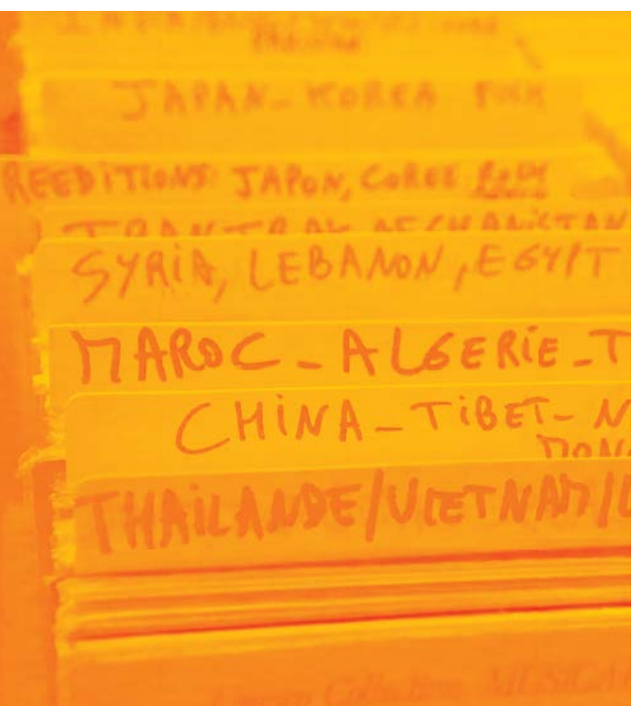
Mexico, Japan, Brazil, India, Australia, Serbia, Venezuela… The dealers come from all corners of the globe to fill 12,500 square metres of Utrecht's vast Jaarbeurs conference centre, 35 miles south of Amsterdam. The genres on sale across an area the size of nearly two football pitches are equally wide. Krautrock. Speed metal. Prog. Nederbeat. South African jazz. Cape Verde folk. A specialist in Golden Earring… If there's a record you're looking for – any record – chances are, it's here, on one of the Mega Record & CD Fair's 550 stalls.

And when the doors are flung open at 9am on the first day, a snaking queue of eager punters from a similarly long list of nations pour into the hall. Some 25,000 people leave behind the springtime sunshine for this vast utilitarian air hangar-like hall over two days that would test the willpower of even the most financially challenged magazine journalist.

The undisputed world's biggest record fair happens twice a year, with a total of 60,000 people paying €12 to €14 each to spend a day digging through thousands of crates in search of the Holy Grail. And for traders wanting to

take up a stall, there's a five-year waiting list. Anyone harbouring the slightest shred of doubt about vinyl's enduring appeal in 2017 would be advised to step inside this cavernous cathedral to the format – vinyl is in rude health. And organiser Cas Bosland, reflecting on the success of an event he's been putting on since 1992, has ▶





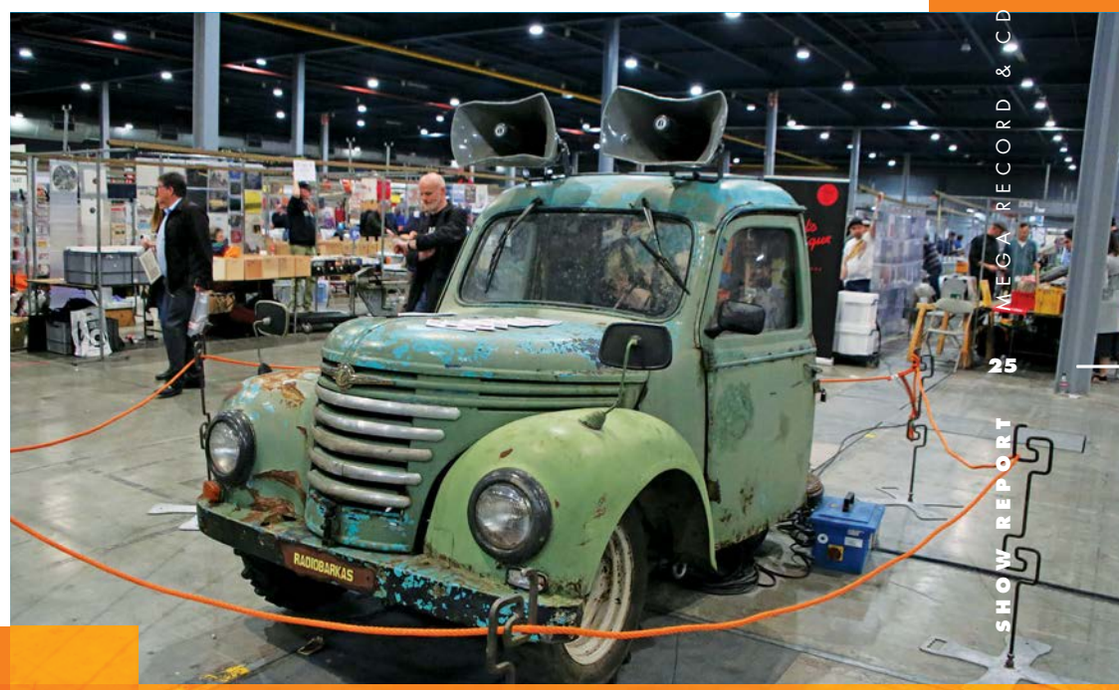
always believed in its wellbeing. "We never thought the interest in vinyl was lost," he tells *Long Live Vinyl* in the event's nerve centre at the rear of the hall. "It's always been big here – 20 years ago, at the beginning of this century, we went to all the big fairs in the world, and we knew by then we were the largest in the world. People didn't believe us, because they always say, 'America is much bigger'.

"The one in Austin, Texas [the Austin Record Convention] that was in those days the biggest, has nowhere near the number of dealers we have here. We have dealers from 50 different countries, coming from as far as South Africa, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Ukraine, India and every European country.

"There was a little dip around the economic banking crisis in 2008, but since then, the amount of visitors has gone up, and in the last five or six years, we've noticed a lot more young people coming to the show, too. We've always believed in vinyl. I always thought it would outlast my days and in 2017, there are more young people coming. We've seen the same with Kindles: their sales have gone down because young people are buying books again. We saw many book shops and record shops disappearing, but in the last couple of years, more record and book shops are opening again. It's the feeling of vintage – going back to print, something physical."

That younger demographic being drawn to Utrecht has brought with it new interests and trends, and Cas says the genres in demand at the fair are changing.

"When we started, rock 'n' roll was really big on vinyl, but nowadays, those people are getting so old. Young people are looking for different stuff, and we've noticed over the years – first of all, the 50s were really interesting,



10 years later, it was the 60s, then it was the 70s and now, people are even looking for the 2000s on vinyl, as there was not much vinyl pressed in those days because of the CD.

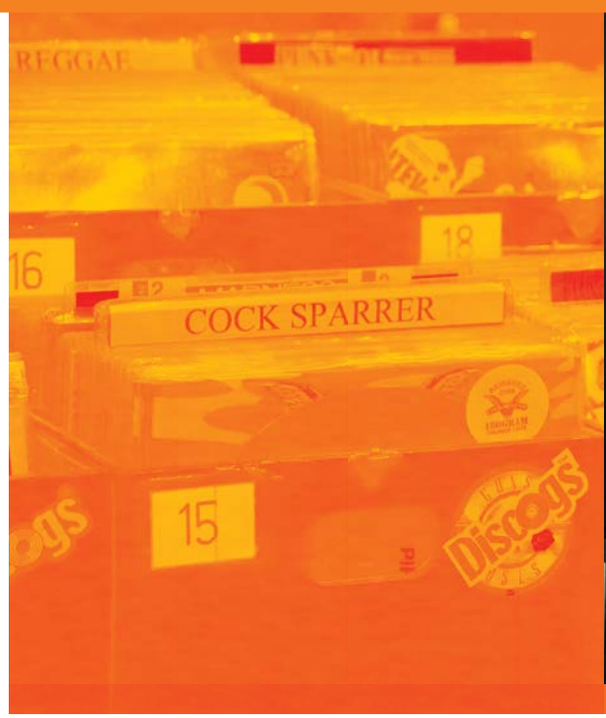
"We started organising fairs in 1985, and realised about 10 years later that less is more. More quality in the big one and skip the smaller ones, because we were organising fairs all over Germany and Holland. We decided quality is more important than quantity, and since then, it's grown really huge."

IT'S A GROWER

"The fair in November attracts about 33,000 to 35,000 visitors. In April, it's slightly less – 24,000 to 26,000," Cas tells us. "On a yearly basis, we have 60,000 people, and in the last couple of years it's growing again, definitely."

Day one of the show sees the UK's Omega Auctions host a 'Live From Utrecht' sale of rare and collectable vinyl records, with *Long Live Vinyl* joining around 100 buyers fighting it out to land items from a catalogue of 85 rare pressings. The most expensive sale on the day is a second UK stereo pressing of The Beatles' *Please Please Me* that fetches £5,000. A single-sided acetate of the Sex Pistols' *Did You No Wrong*, meanwhile, proves the biggest story of the day, far exceeding the guide price of £800 to £1,200 to sell for an eyewatering £3,250.

We keep our hands firmly in our pockets throughout, although our more modest record hunting proves largely successful. Our aim to track down a limited-edition copy of New York band The Antlers' *In London* double live album bears fruit within minutes of entering the hall, thanks to a helpful German dealer. We then pick up a bargain copy of Richard Hawley's *Standing At The Sky's Edge*, and Van Morrison's *T.B. Sheets* at €5 is a snip.



Spending the best part of two days trying to find decent original pressings of Scott Walker's *Scott 4* and Bob Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* ends in disappointment, as we run out of time and settle for a 180-gram reissue of the Dylan album. Next time, we'll swallow our pride and ask someone…

Elsewhere, Dutch artist Henk Zielman displays his works of vinyl art, sculptures formed from original Beatles and Metallica LPs, and we try out the "VIP of record cleaning machines" – the Okki Nokki – retailing at £400. There's a mini festival stage hosting bands, a pop quiz, stalls dedicated to T-shirts, music magazines, posters, record sleeve doormats and vinyl storage, a company promoting a vinyl-related social-media network and even a few CDs and cassettes…

Joining the throng of happy shoppers winding towards the train station at the end of the opening day – many pulling trolleys filled with their purchases – *Long Live Vinyl* chats to American collector Tim Earle. "I've been coming to the fair for five or six years now, and it still makes more sense for me to come here than to fly to Austin, Texas during SXSW," he says. "The flight is only $100 more, and there's so much good stuff here.

"I'm more of an expert on American and Canadian stuff, but there's a lot of really good European stuff around, too, this year – early-70s prog and that kind of thing, that's worth good money. Utrecht's not just the biggest in the world, it's the best, too."

WORLD'S FAIR

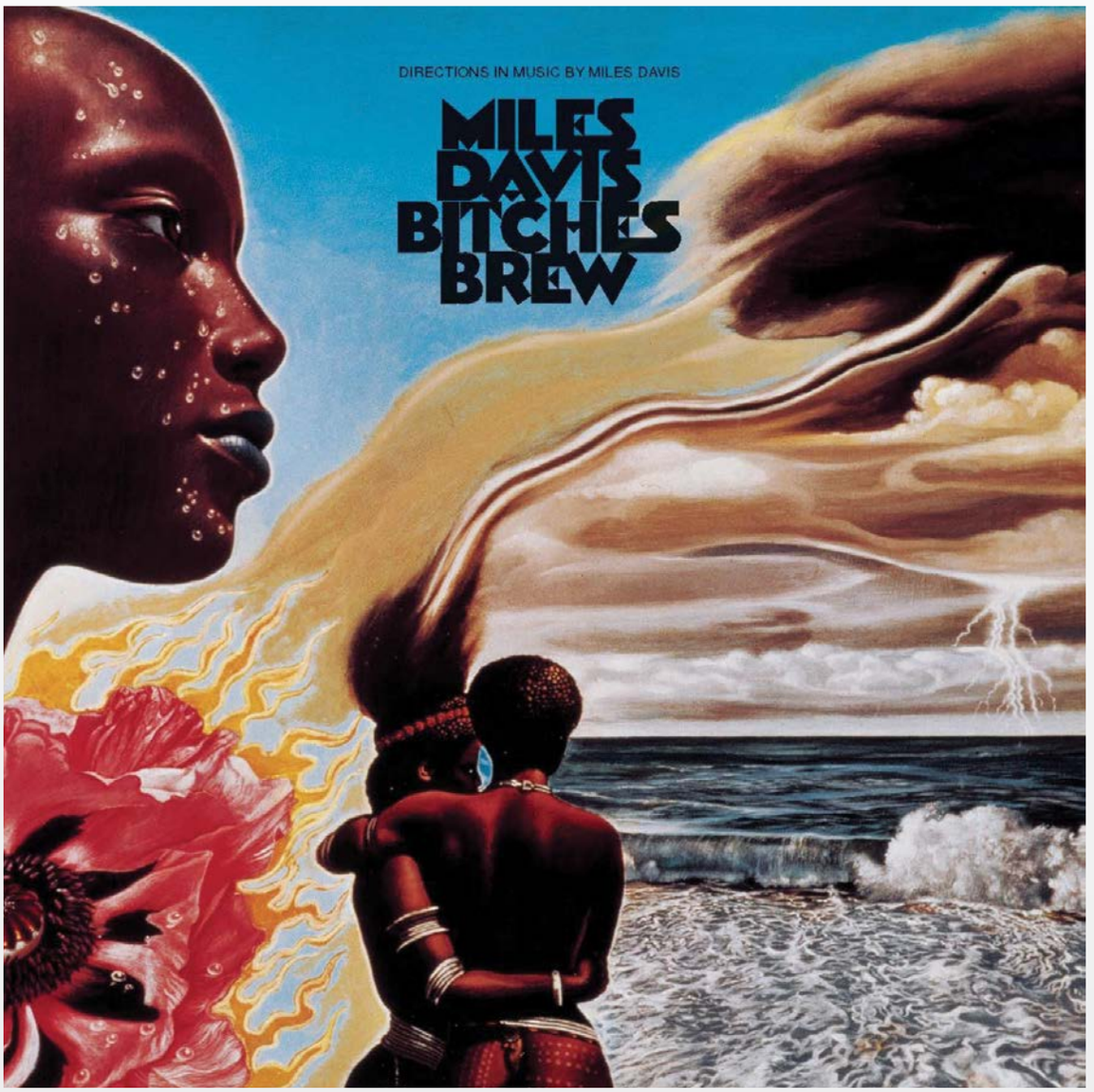
Returning to the show on day two, we ask Cas, who estimates his personal collection at 3,000 to 3,500 records, how the Mega Record & CD Fair gained and holds on to its crown.

"We always try to have extra things, like live music, DJs, exhibitions, an auction, a pop quiz, vinyl art… we try to give it something special. It's not just people looking down at the records, they can look up and see something interesting, too.

"This year, the theme was The Summer Of Love. Because of all the turmoil in the world, and it's 50 years ago that all of these important albums were published, like *Sgt. Pepper's…*, *Smile*, The Velvet Underground, and Iggy Pop had just started with The Stooges, we thought we must give some power to the people.

"Visitors to this fair come to see each other – it's a social event. They come from all over the world to talk to each other, to deal with each other and exchange information, and it's worldwide. This time, we're doing the Summer Of Love, and hopefully, we'll spread the word across the world…" ●

The Story Behind The Sleeve



#1 Bitches Brew

Miles Davis

This wildly experimental 1970 double album saw Miles Davis fuse jazz to psychedelic rock, with unsettling, sinister-sounding results that would play a defining role in the future of jazz.

The gatefold sleeve, featuring a painting by the hugely influential German artist Mati Klarwein, has been interpreted as a comment on racial divisions in America, with a black and a white woman intertwined across its spine. The surrealist, contradictory light and shade of the sleeve is utterly appropriate for the pioneering, fusion melting pot of musical instruments on an album that divided opinion, being seen alternately as a daring departure or the death of jazz. The original work was sold in the 1970s and it's said that Davis tried – unsuccessfully – to track it down and buy it the following decade. Klarwein referred to Salvador Dali as a "spiritual father" and his friend Timothy Leary once said of the German's visionary style: "Mati didn't need psychedelics!".

His 1961 painting *Annunciation* became the sleeve for the Santana album *Abraxas*, also released in 1970, and the 52 record covers Klarwein produced before his death in 2002 were featured in a hardback 12-inch book, *Mati & The Music*, published in 2012.

The Vinyl REVOLUTION

THE TRUE STORY BEHIND THE RECORD INDUSTRY'S INCREDIBLE REVIVAL

It was missing, presumed dead. But after a decade of growth, in 2017, vinyl has passed a billion-dollar milestone. Author **Gareth Murphy** explains the story behind our beloved format's spectacular comeback

Why does this 130-year-old format keep refusing to die? Ask 10 music lovers what's so special about vinyl and you'll probably get 10 theories, that also reveal something about the people themselves. "You can hear all the work that's been put in!" exclaimed John Lydon of the way in which, compared to CDs, vinyl seems to magnify the true grit that albums are made of. Or, when an audiophile whined to John Peel about vinyl's problem of "surface noise", England's most adventurous DJ nailed it in one: "Listen, mate, life is full of surface noise!".

Of all the formats ever invented, the vinyl record has the biggest personality. It's the artwork you'd proudly hang on your wall. It's the warm sound of analogue. It's the way that albums tell better stories when they've two sides. It's the ritual of carefully sliding the record out of its sleeve and hooking up the needle, with its delicious crackle.

UK Vinyl in 2016

VINYL SALES UP TO 3.2 MILLION

2007 was a low point, with only 200,000 sales. 2016 was the ninth consecutive year of growth

Queues outside South Record Shop in Southend on Record Store Day

Even the core weakness of the vinyl record – its fragility – unconsciously arouses in music lovers a sense of preciousness, which we value and protect. For me, it's the unmistakable perfume created by the sleeve and the vinyl. One whiff and I'm flashed back to childhood in the late 70s, discovering Electric Light Orchestra and Lene Lovich – a sensation I shamelessly call "undressing the muse". I'd like to think I'm not alone in my sleeve-sniffing perversion, even though I know that for today's young adults driving all this growth, nostalgia has nothing to do with it.

"Most of my vinyl customers are young, well-educated women," says Bryan Burkert, owner of Baltimore's hippest record store, Sound Garden. "They just seem to connect more with artists than their male counterparts." What these young ladies and gentlemen seem to seek is collectibility and a touchy-feely proximity to the artistic experience – it's why so many new releases take deluxe packaging to dazzling extremes, including highly prized release-day editions signed by the artist.

THE WORLD SPINS ON ITS AXIS

As it turns out, there are rational reasons why such an old and supposedly obsolete format has risen from the dead. To begin with, vinyl was never completely extinct. Throughout the 1990s, vinyl became a club-oriented niche for working DJs – a market so small compared to the booming CD, most record companies paid little in royalties on the grounds that these 12"s were limited-edition promotional support.

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last-standing beehives of the music business. Elaborate vinyl packaging was only one of many ideas explored in the terrifying depths of the record crash – but nowadays, if you ask any store owner or record label boss who's survived to tell the tale, they'll tell you: nobody saw this coming.

Everyone, however, agrees that the creation of Record Store Day, in 2007, provided the urgently needed platform to take their cause to the public. 10 years on and the facts speak for themselves. According to SoundScan, America's music sales monitor, sales of vinyl during the week of Record Store Day have grown consistently from about 10,000 units in 2007 to almost 400,000 last year. For the 1,400 or so independent record stores still in business across America, that's a 10-million-dollar festival during what used to be the most barren period of the year. Considering the vinyl record was an American invention, it's no surprise they're leading this revival. In the first decade of this century, closures were the norm – but since 2011, about 30 to 40 new independent stores have opened every year in the US.

Officially, 12 million vinyl records were sold in America throughout 2016. However, as Michael Kurtz, co-founder of Record Store Day, warns: "The numbers are all inaccurate. The vast majority of vinyl is still sold in indie stores and about 90 per cent of them do not report sales." He points

In the late 1930s, major labels marketed affordable record players to teenagers

to Steve Sheldon, president of the Rainbo Records pressing plant in California, who admitted to the New Music Seminar in 2015 that his factory was producing roughly the same volumes of vinyl that SoundScan was posting for all of America. "And that's just one factory!" gasps Kurtz. The real figures might be five times higher than what's being announced in the media, especially if you include websites and what bands are selling directly to their fans.

In Britain, over three million vinyl albums were sold last year. That's still just a five per cent slice of the national music market – all formats combined – but it's growing by 50 per cent each year. Although Britain's sales figures are more reliable than America's, they are nonetheless misleading. For the 250 or so record shops across the UK, vinyl has been a crucial component of survival. The same applies to the indie labels, which sign and develop all the unknown acts that keep the music scene fresh.

For the working class of the music business, not only does vinyl retail at £20,

IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE NEW CENTURY, ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING CREATED AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

But specialist record stores never stopped stocking vinyl and even the large megastore chains, such as Tower and Virgin, operated small vinyl departments dedicated to underground genres.

Then, of course, in the first years of the new century, illegal downloading sent the CD industry tumbling into financial and existential crisis. Faced with extinction, struggling corner stores realised they had to react to this brave new world of screens and invisible, worthless music. To remain relevant, shops had to provide exclusives, in-store showcases, talks, album signings. With so many megastores closing, the smaller indie stores had to carry the torch as the

Getty

Drake was the most streamed artist on Spotify in 2016, with more than 4.7 billion streams

PUBLICISING MUSIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE STILL RELIES ON GIGS, AIRPLAY, NEWSPAPER REVIEWS AND TV APPEARANCES

TOTAL UK MUSIC CONSUMPTION UP 1.5% TO 123 MILLION ALBUM PURCHASES IN 2016

Vinyl accounts for over 75 per cent of Rough Trade's sales in their Brooklyn store

shops buy it upfront – unlike CDs, which are taken on sale-or-return consignment. So, although vinyl is expensive and complicated to press, selling small quantities to these tastemaker networks is far smarter business than the supposed simplicity and inexpense of uploading copyright to the likes of YouTube, where thousands of anonymous views generate pennies rather than pounds.

THE PRICE OF FREEMIUM

To understand the true impact of vinyl, one needs to place it in the wider picture. The global music industry has shrunk from its $40 billion high point in 1999 to about $14 billion today. Vinyl is about five to six times smaller than the very biggest growth sector, subscription-based streaming. With its 50 million paying subscribers, Spotify is now the industry powerhouse, generating about $4 billion annually: a generous 80 per cent of which it distributes back to labels and artists in royalties.

In terms of audiences, however, YouTube is by far the biggest player on the field – clocking up five billion views each day. The problem is that YouTube's 'freemium' model has paid only a total of $1 billion in royalties over 10 years, despite its owners, Google, raking in about $4 billion annually from YouTube advertising. Using congressional lobbyists to thwart attempts at regulation, YouTube claims it's a promotional medium and should be paying only the small royalties that FM radio pays.

On the other side of the vinyl market, the Compact Disc is sailing into the sunset, but it hasn't dropped off the horizon as people imagine. A whopping 47 million CDs were sold in Britain last year, generating £400 million – 47 per cent of the national market. In America, 141 million CDs were sold, about a third of their industry's income.

Two countries in particular stand as notable holdouts; Japan and Germany. Not only was the CD a Sony invention that still arouses local sentimentality, Japan remains the reference among CD collectors all over the world. Immaculately printed on heavyweight tactile paper, complete with protective sleeves for the discs, the Japanese CD arguably pioneered the deluxe model that American and English indies have since adapted to vinyl. The CD still accounts

for 70 per cent of the Japanese market – over a billion dollars annually. Meanwhile, Germany sells a little under one-billion-euros-worth of CDs every year, about two thirds of its market. It's unlikely these two countries can hold back the digital tide indefinitely, but the point is: many millions of buyers still like the CD.

Hence the curious case of Amazon which, in 2015, overtook Apple's iTunes Store to become the world's biggest music retailer. Theories vary, but the most plausible explanation is that due to the closure of megastores, the decline of the iPod and the natural effects of ageing, the older end of the market is increasingly using the internet to browse for music and have their finds delivered to their doorsteps. This invisible and relatively wealthy market helps explain why the CD remains far bigger than people imagine, albeit in steady decline.

To put it mildly, the record business has never been as complex. As well as geographical diversity, there are about four generational layers – each with its own habits and contradictions. For example, subscription streaming accounts for 92 per cent of the Swedish market – the home of Spotify, whereas it accounts for just eight per cent in nearby Germany. In America, 80 per cent of youngsters use YouTube as their main source of music, whereas Spotify scores very poorly amongst teenagers everywhere. It remains to be seen if the Scandinavian model can conquer the world's biggest market – America – let alone maintain its current growth rates as European teenagers grow up.

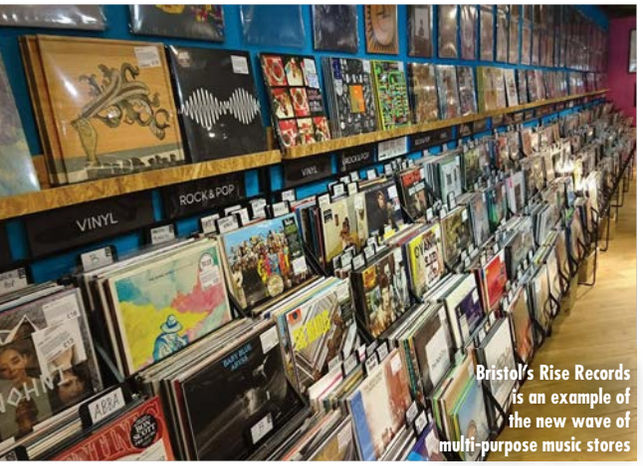
To work in such a confusing environment, all record labels, big and small, have had to become adaptable, multi-armed creatures. They must deal with everything from digital rights, vinyl, CDs and merchandise to third-party licensing, publishing and even artist management. The growth of Spotify and vinyl has certainly lifted spirits, but the music industry has become wary of fads. As Napster, MySpace and iTunes have shown, the digital revolution has so far been a series of sandcastles and five-year tides.

The inherent problem with all digital platforms is they're drab libraries, where visitors get lost easily if they don't know what they're looking for. The music business operates on hits – that is to say, tribal sensations that take our public spaces by storm. This is why publicising music in the digital age still relies on gigs, airplay, newspaper reviews and TV appearances – in other words, as much real-life action as possible to arouse curiosity and get people singing and dancing.

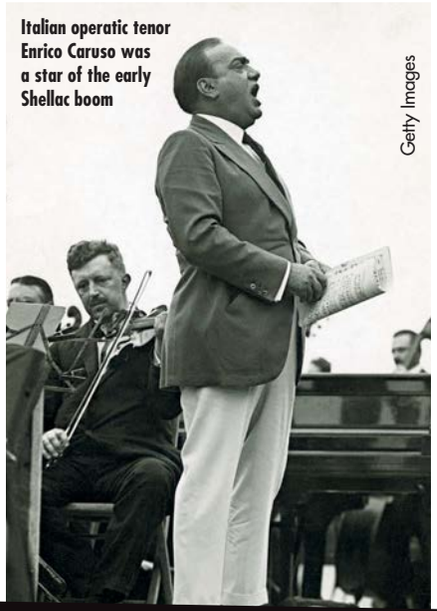
For the many who can't afford advertising and have to fight their way in artistically, vinyl has become the sharp end of the cutting edge. The vinyl release has become the central showpiece, the event, from which CD and digital success will hopefully snowball. Just 500 pressings distributed into tastemaker networks can be the resounding statement that gets the word on the street.

A ROUGH TRADE-OFF

Take Rough Trade's impressive store in Brooklyn, where vinyl accounts for 75 per cent of sales. Admittedly, Rough Trade is seeing more of an even split between



Bristol's Rise Records is an example of the new wave of multi-purpose music stores


Italian operatic tenor Enrico Caruso was a star of the early Shellac boom

Getty Images

vinyl and CDs in its two London stores, but you get the picture. As for the bigger indie labels, whose business is bringing underground artists into the mainstream, Harry Martin of Domino Records explains how "the percentage of vinyl will naturally decrease as an album gets more successful, simply because the CD will start selling in supermarkets and Amazon, and people start listening online".

A cursory glance at the UK charts proves his point. The new album by indie band The Moonlandingz entered the album chart at No. 92, having sold 600 CDs and 450 vinyl copies in its first week. It's a stark contrast to the No. 1, Ed Sheeran's *Divide* which, in its fourth week, sold 114,000 CDs and 1,600 vinyls. The Moonlandingz barely registered on digital, whereas Sheeran's album clocked up 21,000 streams and 18,000 downloads. Curiously enough,

IN ITS FOURTH WEEK, ED SHEERAN'S *DIVIDE* SOLD 114,000 CDS AND 1,600 VINYL COPIES

Sheeran's song *Shape Of You* topped the singles chart with half a million streams, despite there being no physical single. Hence why, when all the indies are mixed up with the corporate blockbusters, vinyl computes at only five per cent.

As Rough Trade's store manager, Nigel House, puts it: "Vinyl is anti-establishment. Most under-30s listen to music on mobiles with bud earphones that make everything sound thin and tinny. I'm not sure this revival is driven by vinyl's supposedly superior sound quality. It's more that vinyl is so tactile and is the absolute antithesis of the digital world."

Yes indeed, for twenty-something rebels, vinyl is a reaction to the age of throwaway pop that entertainment corporations have been churning out for 20 years. It's no secret that in today's post-crash music economy, the major corporations have learned to recoup their multi-million-dollar investments more from the spin-offs than from the actual recordings – which are mostly given away to kids via YouTube. Never before has pop been such a sugary hook to monetise brandnames and mass celebrity in other ways.

GHOST IN THE SHELLAC

The strangest aspect of this upheaval is that everything has happened before. Although the precursor to the vinyl LP was a 10" 78 made from a harder black substance called Shellac, the laterally cut disc has been around since the 1890s. In the first two decades of the 20th century, the gramophone was a cultural explosion that launched stars such as Enrico Caruso and gave us imprints including His Master's Voice and Columbia. Thanks mainly to the enthusiasm of women, the gramophone industry boomed spectacularly for two glorious decades, but with the unexpected arrival of radio in the 1920s – that is, free music on new technology – record sales began plummeting.

When the financial markets crashed in 1929, the declining record business became the worst hit of all Great Depression industries. By 1934, only six million records were sold in the US; a 95 per cent collapse in less than a decade.

Back then, as today, newspapers and banks assumed the record was obsolete. But what kept the bottomed-out business of the Great Depression alive were mail-order communities and die-hard specialist stores. English labels such as EMI and Decca were particularly adept at creating 'clubs' of music fanatics – a practice which pushed production into purist niches. This is why, despite appalling market conditions, the 1930s spawned some of the greatest blues, jazz, folk and experimental classical music ever recorded. Billie Holiday's earliest classics sold less than 5,000 copies at the time. Robert Johnson's cult recordings sold in the hundreds.

By the late 1930s, however, majors such as RCA, Columbia and EMI understood that the barrier to recovery was that most

Bella Union's stylish vinyl shop in Brighton enables the label to cut out the middleman

homes had only old or broken record players. And so they began targetting the next crop of teenagers, who never knew the gramophone boom of yore, nor were in awe of radio sets as teenagers had been in the 1920s. Simplified turntables were launched at around $7.50 – the equivalent of around £100 in today's money. The logic was simple: if cash-strapped teenagers had new turntables, they'd start collecting records. In 1929, the founder of Decca, Sir Edward Lewis, used the analogy that you had to give away razors to sell blades.

After 15 years of crisis, today's music business feels it's been through the worst, but with worrying reports that half of all physical albums bought are never even opened, has anyone thought of targetting today's kids with affordable players? Curiously, one of the success stories of today's vinyl revival is Crosley, an independently owned manufacturer of retro-styled turntables. Although criticised by audiophiles as toy-like, their portable designs are based on the very turntables that helped bring the record business back to life in the 1940s. With some models retailing at around $150, Crosley's biggest-selling model, the Cruiser, has sold a million units.

"There was always a market for the 60-year-old guy rediscovering his vinyl collection," explains Scott Bingaman of Crosley's chief distributor, Deer Park. "But the market changed dramatically around 2007, when lower-priced players came on offer at Target and other stores. Since then, it's been mostly growth." About $2 million worth of Crosley turntables are sold every year in American record stores, and they're now being stocked in fashion chains such as Urban Outfitters.

As the wave starts to creep into the mainstream, the big worry among record shop owners is that vinyl, crucial as it's been to their own survival, might be becoming another 'lifestyle' fad. But as Bingaman rightly concludes: "The average indie-store owner doesn't see the bigger picture. They only see the already-converted in their stores. Most people on the street still have no idea that vinyl has come back to the degree it has. So, getting kids who shop at Urban Outfitters, Target and Tesco to buy our turntables is making the overall vinyl pie bigger. To see how fashionable vinyl is becoming, just look at the Crosley hashtags on Instagram. So many people today regard vinyl as a part of who they are."

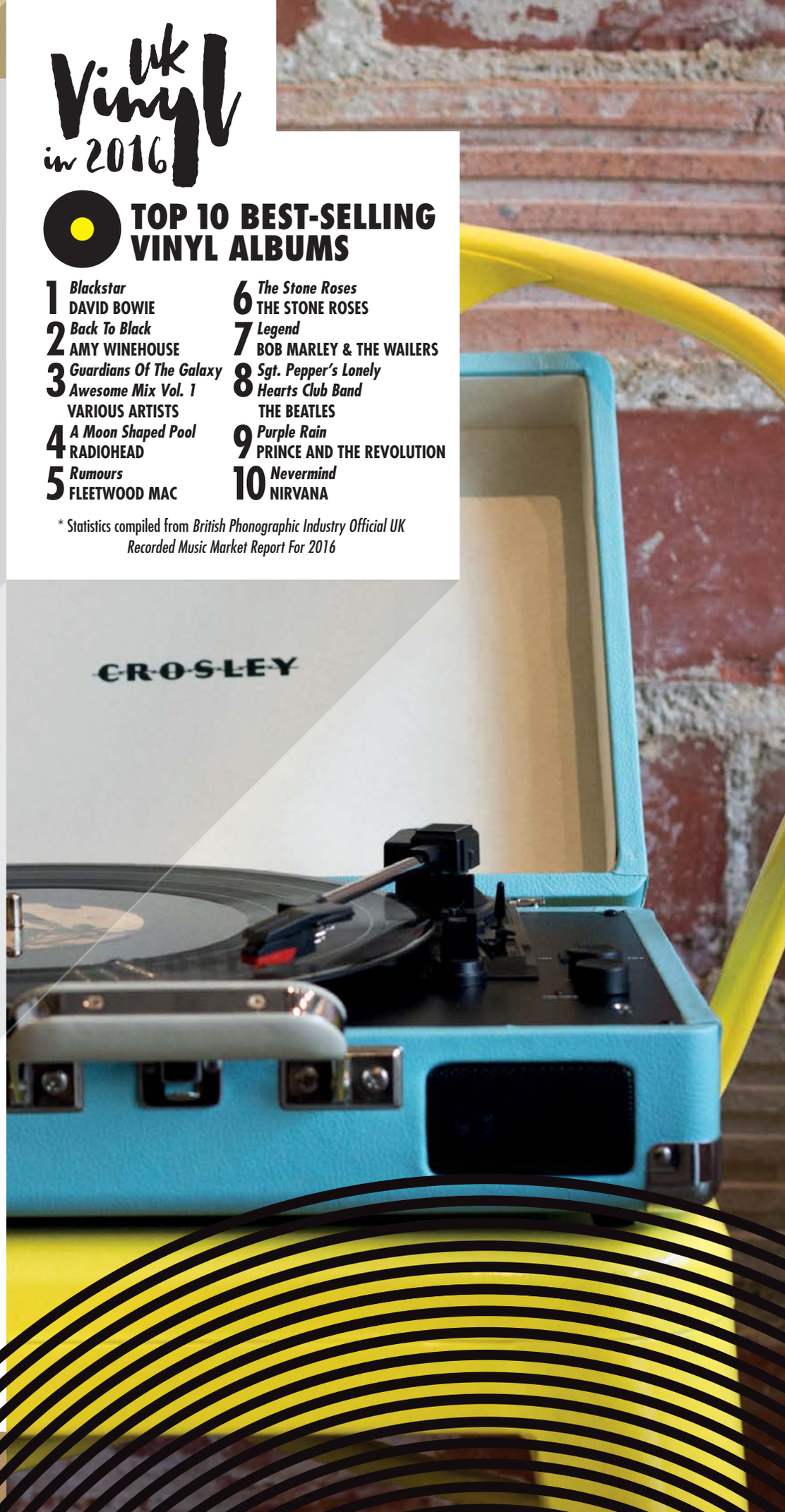
Ultimately, the true test of the vinyl revolution is whether labels, manufacturers and retailers can take the culture of £20 objects beyond the confines ▶

UK Vinyl in 2016

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING VINYL ALBUMS

1. *Blackstar* – DAVID BOWIE
2. *Back To Black* – AMY WINEHOUSE
3. *Guardians Of The Galaxy Awesome Mix Vol. 1* – VARIOUS ARTISTS
4. *A Moon Shaped Pool* – RADIOHEAD
5. *Rumours* – FLEETWOOD MAC
6. *The Stone Roses* – THE STONE ROSES
7. *Legend* – BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS
8. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* – THE BEATLES
9. *Purple Rain* – PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION
10. *Nevermind* – NIRVANA

* Statistics compiled from *British Phonographic Industry Official UK Recorded Music Market Report For 2016*



RADIO AND RECORDS CAME TO COEXIST – WHY WOULDN'T DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL MUSIC EVOLVE ALONG SIMILAR LINES NOW?

of indie stores, and convert the next generation of teenagers, who grew up in the Great Recession and didn't experience the internet revolution as those born in the booming 1990s did. If history keeps repeating itself, I fear this question will not be decided by simple trends in fashion or technology. World War II changed everything, including the way music was heard and felt. Seeds of recovery were sown in the Great Depression by diehards and connoisseurs, but it was the heartbreak of world events, especially profound among women, which resurrected record-buying to levels not seen in a generation.

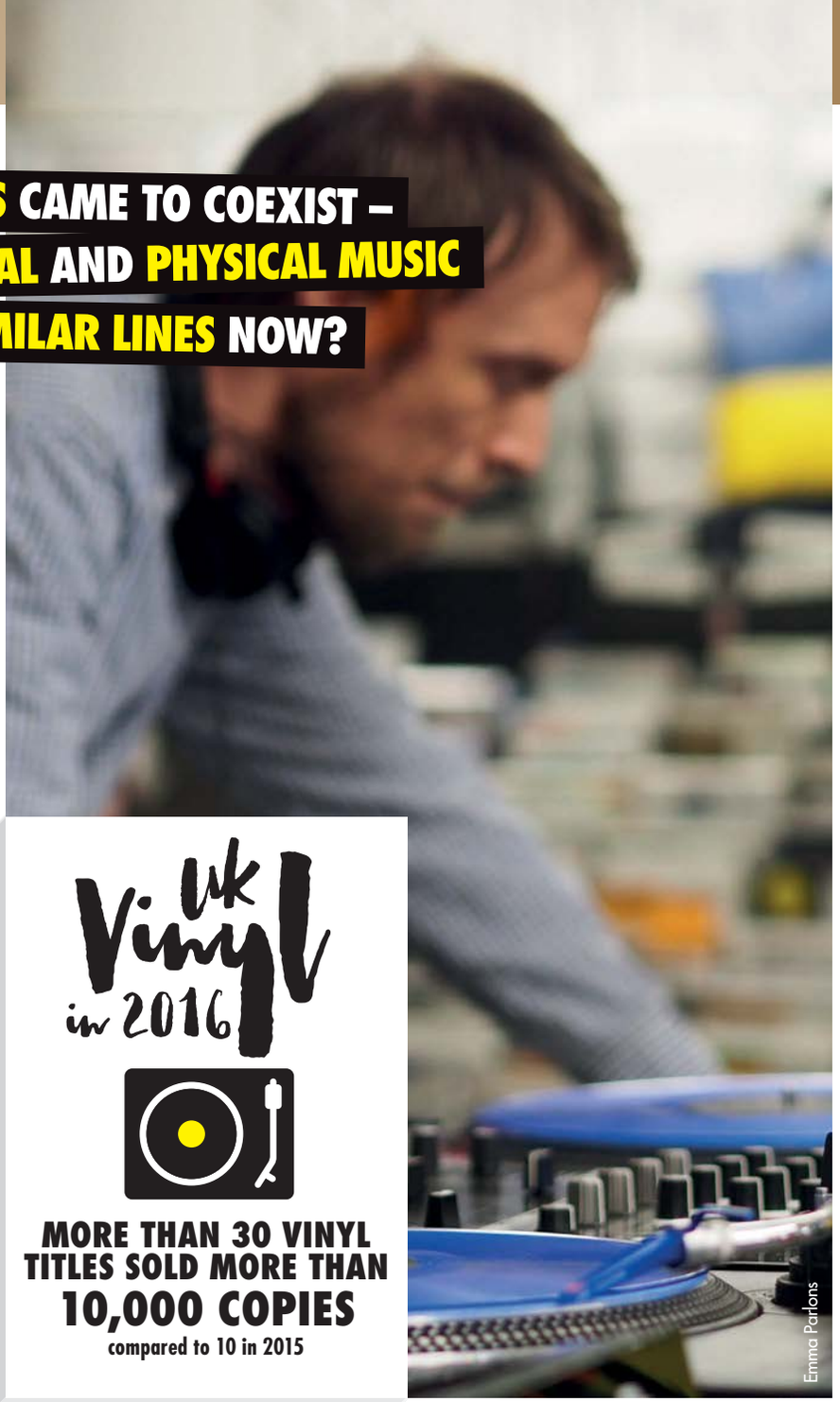
And so, radio and records, once rivals, came to coexist in mutual dependence for decades thereafter. Why wouldn't digital and physical music evolve along similar lines now? One is a browsing tool for keeping up to date, the other is the original artifact to keep through life.

As the word 'revolution' suggests, the world is like a record spinning round in generational cycles. Chances are, today's vinyl rebels will be the ones to influence the habits of the current 13-year-olds coming up. After, all trends spread downwards from schoolyard leaders and older brothers and sisters (we should remember that all record booms – Caruso, blues, wartime serenades, Beatlemania, disco – were driven by women).

Some of us old enough to have lived through the evolution from vinyl to CD perhaps can't relate to today's vinyl revival, nor believe it will last. But considering how the wider world has moved over the last five years, who can say with any certainty how the next decade will unfold?

Come what may, we must acknowledge that vinyl is fuelling a reaction against the scourge of bubblegum pop, while enabling the working class of music to survive and create opportunity.

Nobody can control the tastes of teenagers – but I can't help feeling that we should, at the very least, be helping youngsters to buy their own turntables and adopt the ritual. Ultimately, it's a question of substance. 130 years of recorded music has proved that, when humanity needs a lift, nothing opens eyes and ears quite like the big, beautiful vinyl masterpiece. ●



Emma Parlons

UK Vinyl in 2016

MORE THAN 30 VINYL TITLES SOLD MORE THAN 10,000 COPIES

compared to 10 in 2015

Emma Parlons

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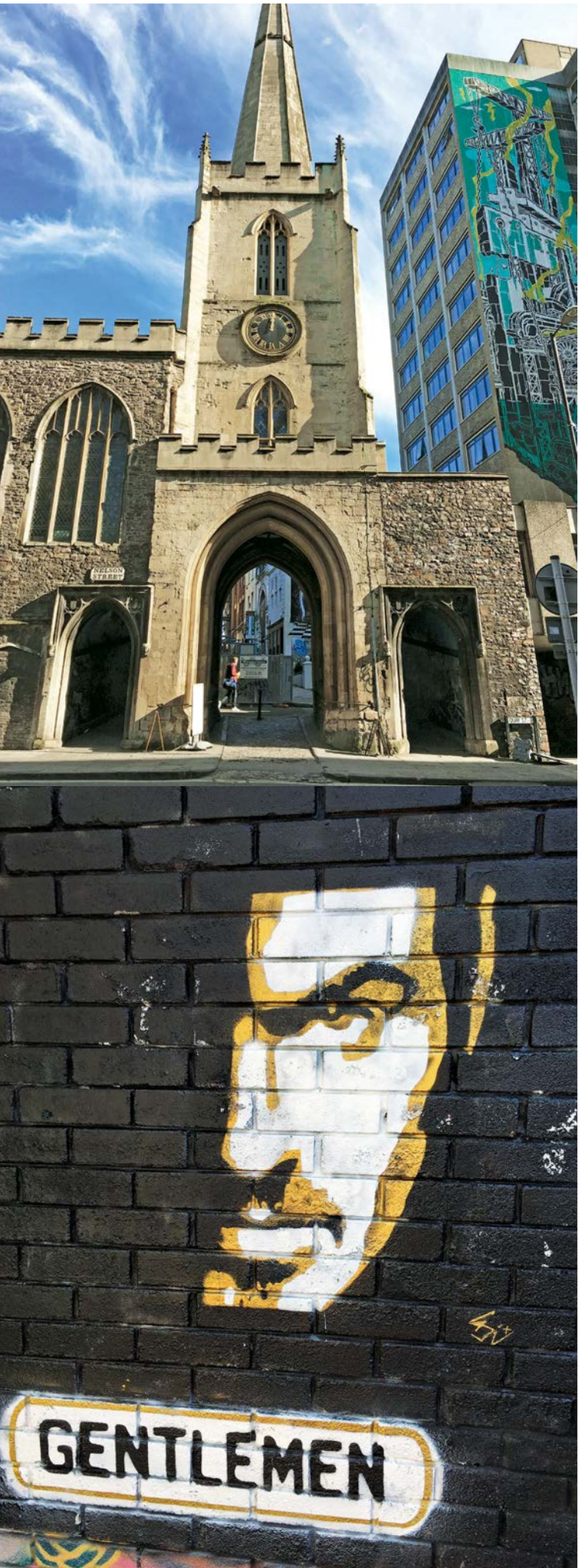


The Trip

Bristol

Mark Elliott continues his crate-digging odyssey in the West Country's vinyl HQ

Go West… The mantra behind Pet Shop Boys' last mega-hit, of course, and actually (see what I did there?) it's today's mission. Now, I always feel sorry for those couples I spot where one person is frantically flicking through a box of vinyl and the other half is supportively, but so obviously, struggling to appear even remotely interested. The 'royal We' just don't do it anymore. So here I am, travelling solo to Bristol. The other half's at home minding the dog and I have a whole day, armed with my iPhone and a scribbled-down list of places to visit. Travelling out from London's Paddington station, I decide to test how successful I can be in the dance and hip-hop capital of the West,with a search for three specific items, as well as the usual haul I'm certain to buy on a whim.

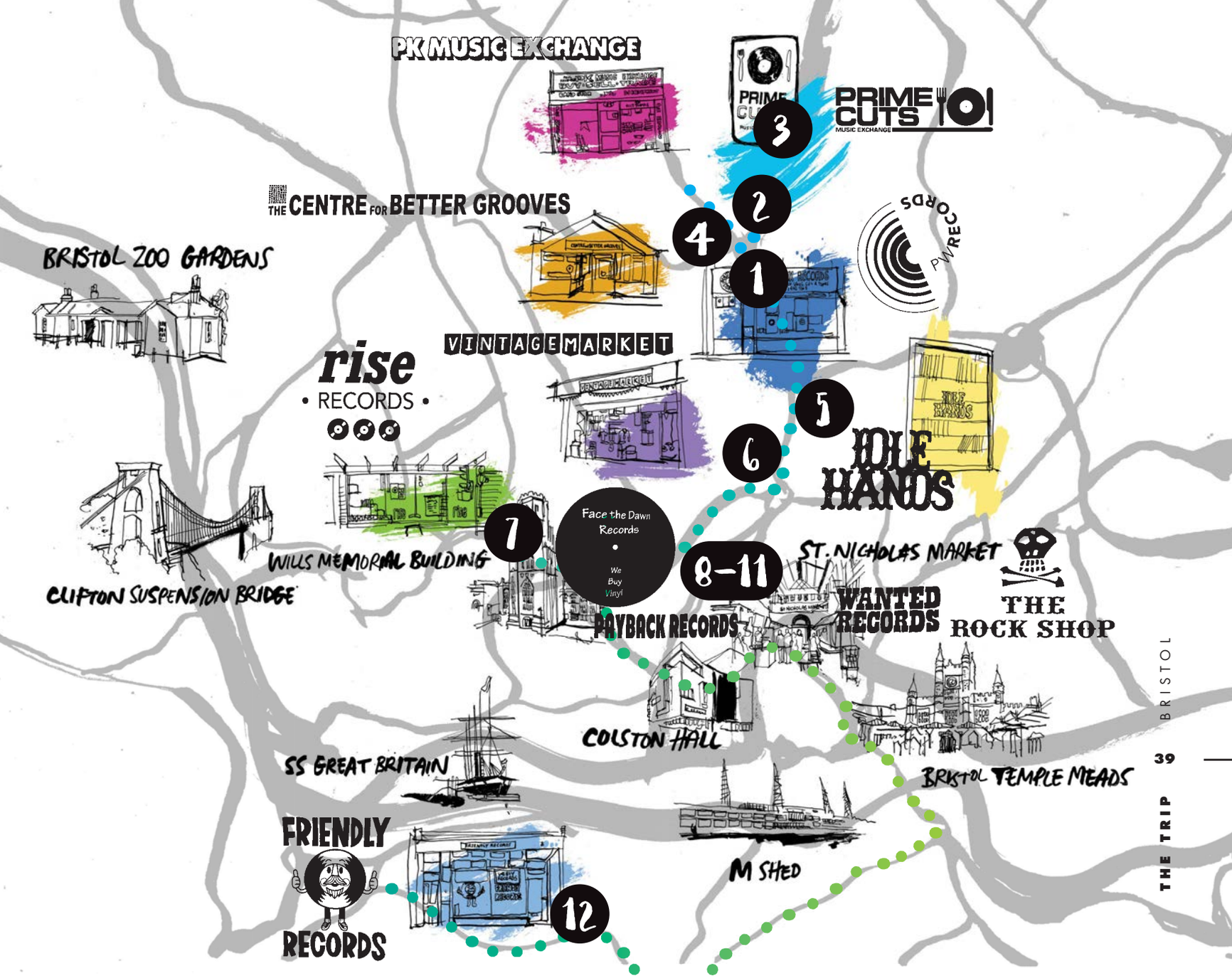
It's a sweet and familiar balance for all collectors – the records you keep an eye out for constantly and the dozens that simply catch your eye while you're out searching. No number of online trawls will ever compare to the heady thrill of stumbling across something unexpected amongst a pile of dross.

Bristol's going to prove quite a treasure hunt – so I commit to seeing how prescriptive I can be with the mission to add to my pitiful collection of The Cure by sourcing a copy of *The Walk* single in any format. I also decide to see if I can find the final piece of my Billy Idol jigsaw – a 12" of the 1990 No. 47 'flop' *Prodigal Blues* – and, finally, a remedy to the rather shocking lack of later Bowie LPs currently shaming my collection. The rest we'll leave to chance.

I decide to test how successful I can be in the dance capital of the West with a search for three specific items

Arriving at Temple Meads station, the first thing that's apparent is that, unlike some other cities, the shops I seek here are spread out and a cab (or, if I'd been better organised, a car) is going to prove essential if I'm buying more than a handful of items. I will be. First stop, then, the Gloucester Road end of town.

Illustration Ben Talon



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❷ PK MUSIC EXCHANGE

51 Gloucester Road, BS7 8AD
pk-music.co.uk
Opening hours
9.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday

❸ PRIME CUTS

85 Gloucester Road, BS7 8AS
twitter.com/primecutsmusic
Opening hours
10am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday

❹ THE CENTRE FOR BETTER GROOVES

1c Cranbrook Road, BS6 7BJ
Opening hours
11am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm Saturday

❺ IDLE HANDS

32a City Road, BS6 7BJ
idlehandsbristol.com
Opening hours
10.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Saturday, noon to 5pm Sunday

❻ THE VINTAGE MARKET

15-19 Stokes Croft, BS1 3PY
facebook.com/vintagestokes
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Thursday and Saturday, 10am to 7pm Friday, 11am to 5pm Sunday

❼ RISE

70 Queens Road, BS8 1QU
rise-music.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, noon to 6pm Sunday

❽ PAYBACK RECORDS

St Nicholas Market, BS1 1JQ
Opening hours
9.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday

❾ FACE THE DAWN

St Nicholas Market, BS1 1JQ
Opening hours
9.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday

❿ THE ROCK SHOP

St Nicholas Market, BS1 1JQ
facebook.com/therockshop
Opening hours
Noon to 5pm Monday to Saturday

⓫ WANTED RECORDS

Unit 1, St Nicholas Market, BS1 1JQ
wantedrecords.co.uk
Opening hours
9.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday

⓬ FRIENDLY RECORDS

8 North Street, BN3 1HT
friendlyrecords.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm Sunday

1 PLASTIC WAX

This is perhaps the granddaddy of Bristol record shops and has acted as a magnet for other retailers to the area, with three now within a few minutes' walk of Plastic Wax, which started out in 1978. The shop is 10 minutes by car from Temple Meads and, billed as Bristol's longest-established indie, Plastic Wax is a great place to start, with well-ordered vinyl, keenly priced. Since the top floors have been converted to flats, much of the stock has been shifted around and the 7" singles I remember from my only previous visit are less obvious than they were, tucked away under racks of LPs and out the back. Manager Dave Kellard says he's seen a real shift in the stuff that's selling. "In the past, you'd have been hard pressed to get rid of a record like *The Sound Of Music* soundtrack and, now, decent copies go very quickly," he says. "It's not so much the youngsters, it's older people like me revisiting stuff they used to love."

The interest has sparked an army of over-confident punters fixated on the idea that everything they want to sell is worth a fortune. Dave says the internet is to blame, but he'll politely point them back in that direction if they are determined to retire on the proceeds of a copy of *Kings Of The Wild Frontier*.

Occasionally, a rare gem will crop up in the piles of stuff people are trying to flog. He recalls a copy of the mail-order Record Club issue of *Electric Jimi Hendrix*, valued at circa £800, turning up a while back. I don't come across that, but relieve him of a 2008 issue of The Smiths' *Singles Box* set. It complements my other finds, which include the Andy Taylor (of Duran Duran) 1987 *Thunder* LP and a 7" of *Into The Groove (Medley)* by 80s cover act Mirage. At £1, it's considerably cheaper than The Smiths package, despite Dave offering a decent discount. I've already spent more than I expected – this is looking like being an expensive day out…

Dave recalls a copy of 'Electric Jimi Hendrix', valued at circa £800, turning up

2 PK MUSIC EXCHANGE

A couple of hundred metres further up Gloucester Road from Plastic Wax, you'll find PK Music Exchange. Bristol is celebrated for its dance culture and this is one of the best stores for second-hand stock of that type I've ever come across. There's a huge amount of vinyl, much of it segregated into genres, and the ground floor carries a phenomenal number of 12" singles, particularly from the past two decades.

Shuffling through the Italo-disco section, I source a nice copy of a Valerie Dore megamix from 1986, and, elsewhere, a couple of later Gloria Estefan promos from her mid-90s disco-diva incarnation. This is one of those shops where the range of stock outranks presentation concerns, and owner Paul Kavanagh's USP as the go-to guy for local bands and DJs sourcing instruments and PA kit means he sees a steady stream of white-label releases. Paul has been serving them for 16 years and says business is brisk. Upstairs, there's a wider range of rock, soul and pop genres, where I pick up a nice picture-disc LP of Eurythmics' *Touch* and Peter Schilling's German-issued maxi single *The Different Story (World Of Lust And Crime)*; this slice of Hi-NRG/synth-pop heaven is a steal at just £5. And then, bingo! There's the 12" picture disc of Billy Idol's *Prodigal Blues*.

Success so early bodes well, but I'm already worrying about how to carry it all home.

3 PRIME CUTS

A few doors along from PK is RePsycho Clothing and, once you've navigated the vertigo-inducing staircase into its basement, you'll find a true Aladdin's Cave in Prime Cuts. Owner Michael Savage has been in business for 17 years and prides himself on a reputation for being able to sell everything, although he admits some of the less interesting stock shifts only once he's put it online. A newly arrived set of classical discs from Austria is battling for Michael's cleaning and indexing attention, and the store is busy with mid-20s guys depleting his stock of jungle – a genre Michael's perhaps most renowned for. I head for the soundtracks and source a good copy of the Brian May-helmed *Mad Max 2* LP and the atmospheric score to *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*, one of my favourite films. Then there's a 12" I have never heard of – the 1978 disco theme to *Battlestar Galactica* from The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Michael's eye-catching labelling suggests it's awesome disco and I decide to trust him on that.

On the way out, I also spot Bob Andy And Marcia Griffiths' *Young, Gifted And Black* album on Trojan displayed on the wall. It's rare to see a good copy of this and I snap it up. I've always loved this 1970 hit – it's one of the first records I remember hearing as a toddler. Not for the first time, I'm reminded how powerful the pull of nostalgia is for this record-collecting boom.

5 IDLE HANDS

Bristol's dynamic and diverse dance scene needs generous servicing and Idle Hands is a real specialist. Most cities have one decent shop stocking these new releases, and the team have been running Idle Hands since 2011. The range is great and the place looks busy with DJs – likely because, on my brief visit, the store has only just reopened again after relocating from Stokes Croft to St Paul's. They're still buying second-hand stock, though, and there are plans to expand the range. It's a bigger space than before and is bright and airy, despite the crowd. It looks like it's going to be another hit.

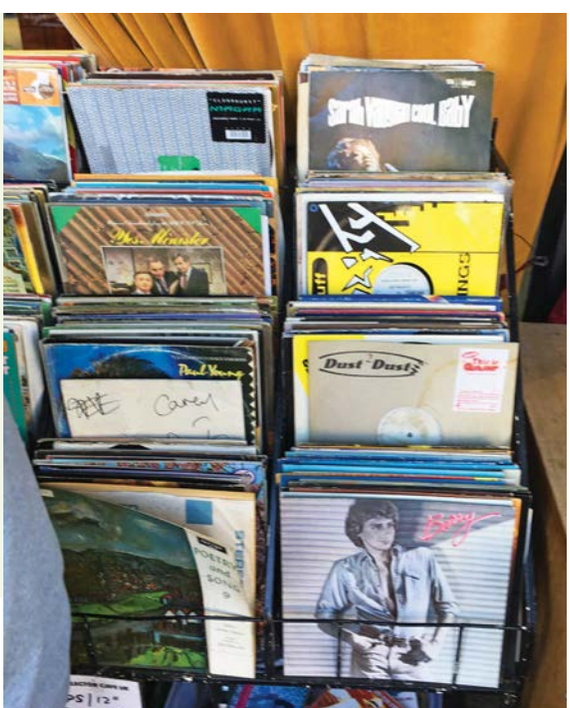
4 THE CENTRE FOR BETTER GROOVES

Now, if record collecting can be described as a religion, then this shop just might be one of its high chapels to the faith, such is the calm, loving air of curation that pervades it. Gordon Montgomery is the man who founded the Fopp chain after a distinguished career at HMV and Virgin Megastores. Now, he's keeping it simple. "There's one landlord, one member of staff and no petty cash thieves," he tells me and, although he admits he'd like to own the world's biggest record shop, it's clear this elegant and beautifully presented space is serving him and the customers well. While I'm here, he deals with a chap looking for some disco 12"s for his brother's birthday and spends time helping him make his choice. It's a warm and friendly exchange that plays to Gordon's passion for soul and R&B. He's also delighted to have taken in some fine jazz finds recently, including a pristine copy of a 1965 Dorothy Ashby album he's in the process of pricing up. I pick up some soul 12"s and Moroder's soundtrack to *Cat People*, which is my first Bowie-related 80s success of the day.

6 THE VINTAGE MARKET

Heading back towards the centre of town, I stop off in the busy bohemian Stokes Croft area and dive into the Vintage Market. It has the usual eclectic range of stalls selling everything from books, taxidermy and, of course, records to clothing and furniture. A couple of stalls, particularly Collector Cave, have some good stuff. I pick up a 7" by The Pretenders – *Never Do That* – which failed to chart in 1990, and a programme from a 1976 Diana Ross European tour.

Rare pop memorabilia of this kind always excites me – how I wish I could have made one of those eight nights she played at the New Victoria Theatre, London, across March and April of that year.



7 RISE

Next, we climb up the long and winding Park Row, past the city's Museum & Art Gallery and stunning Wills Memorial Building towards Clifton. This branch of the regional chain of three independents is a Bristol institution and well worth a visit, with a very strong selection of new vinyl and a small selection of second-hand records.

It's clear this place is gearing up for this year's Record Store Day, and prices are better than I expected. There are some great deals and I pick up a copy of Blondie's *Plastic Letters*, the last missing LP from Debbie Harry and company in my collection, for just £10. The store has a nice cafe and hosts a decent range of events and in-store performances, and there's a wider stock of CDs, books and DVDs – which I know is off-topic, but I find myself drawn to as well. Time for a quick pit-stop in the café, before heading on…

8 PAYBACK

Next, a quick stride down Park Street, to the city centre and St Nicholas Market. Payback, which started in 1998, earns its reputation as a reggae specialist, but I find plenty of other good stuff, too. Like other retailers I've spoken to, I'm told it's people my age who are contributing the most to this vinyl boom.

"If I put a decent Fleetwood Mac or Led Zeppelin disc out now, it will be gone in a morning," says owner Paul Craine. "It didn't used to be like that." He also thinks it's getting harder to source really interesting stock. "It can be that shops are seen as the places people bring stuff they can't shift online," he says. There's little evidence of that, though, in his racks and my prize find is a great boxset of *The Dance Decade 1973-1983* from the Street Sounds label. At £40, it's something I have hoped to find for a while – with Hues Corporation, Freeez and Sugarhill Gang tracks amongst many others on an epic 28 sides of vinyl, it's a party in a box. Payback also accepts Bristol Pounds – a local barter scheme that speaks volumes about the city's sense of community. Everyone is so friendly! It seems light years from London.

Payback, which started in 1998, earns its reputation as a reggae specialist

Top Tips

1 ALLOW PLENTY OF TIME
Bristol is a city of many different areas and communities – often separated by steep hills. While there are clusters of shops in certain areas – Cheltenham/Gloucester Road and St Nicholas Market, for example – some of the best stores are more than a quick stroll from the centre. Be prepared to expend some shoe leather in your pursuit of vinyl.

2 DON'T EXPECT AN UNBELIEVABLE DEAL
Most of Bristol's record traders have been in the game for a good few years, and will have been offered a copy of Neil Diamond's *All-Time Greatest Hits* before. Often a dealer's first offer will be the best you'll get. Only attempt to bargain if you genuinely know your stuff, because they will know theirs.

3 PICK YOUR MOMENT
Saturdays are busy in central Bristol, particularly in St Nick's market where four of these stores are, so the best time to go is midweek. Avoid lunchtimes, though, because the market is busy with office workers taking advantage of the mouthwatering array of food stalls [we recommend the Al Bab Mansour Moroccan stall or Eat A Pitta, Ed].

4 TAKE IN A RECORD FAIR
Bristol plays host to some first-class record fairs, not least the one held four times a year over four floors at Colston Hall – the largest in the South West.

5 GO FURTHER AFIELD
Bath is only around 15 miles away, with a few excellent record shops of its own, while a pitstop en route at Keynsham's Longwell Records will be well worth your while.

9 FACE THE DAWN

Clustered in another corner of the market, I find the first of three record shops within a stone's throw of each other. Weighed down by my purchases, I'm almost disappointed to discover this is another well-stocked gem. Thinking practically, I focus on the generous 7" racks.

I pick up a handful of choice finds, including one of the things I love about crate digging: the record you've never heard of that you buy because it may just be The Best Thing Ever. Who can say what happened with Cowboys International, a Virgin signing from 1979, after this sole release from 1980? A look at Discogs on my phone tells me *Today Today* is power pop and features an uncredited Marco Pirroni. Good enough for me.

10 THE ROCK SHOP

With a clear bias towards punk, rock and new wave, this eclectic store actually carries a wide range of other memorabilia with its vinyl. Owner Ziggy tells me the records started as a sideline because he was a big collector and needed somewhere to offload them. After divorcing, he was able to pursue his passion properly and set up this multi-faceted music business.

The next plan is to set up a rock café somewhere and, on my visit, he's going through a stack of old *NME* and *Kerrang!* editions to source some cuttings to decorate the walls. I pick up a copy of The Stranglers' cover of *All Day And All Of The Night* on 7" and go to pay. Ziggy passes over a couple of free CDs for me to review when I tell him that I write for magazines. "No expectation," he tells me and, I have to admit, Criminal Mind and The Dukes Of Bordello don't strike me as typical of my taste, but I promise to give them a listen.

Yet again, I'm struck by how warm the welcome is. It's a cliché, but record-shop staff can struggle to make eye contact sometimes, let alone conversation. Not in Bristol, though… it may be the sunshine, but it seems like everyone's on happy pills.

11 WANTED RECORDS

Now, John Stapleton, who runs Wanted, is a man who clearly knows his stuff. The sign on the door makes a borderline chilly declaration – Chris De Burgh records are not needed – but the welcome's as friendly here as elsewhere and I'm certain if the Irish singer came knocking with a collection of his material, John would be obliging enough.

In truth, John knows it's because some records still won't sell – despite the upturn – and while I'm there, a punter turns up with boxes of largely dross to try to offload. This is a real collector's store with everything in great condition, but prices are fair. John makes a conscious effort not to sell the best stock online and it explains why, after nearly eight years, it's one of the Bristol stores with the best reputation.

I pick up very nice editions of David Bowie's *Let's Dance* and *Never Let Me Down* albums. One a classic, of course; the other rather less so, but you'll have guessed by now that the 1980s really do it for me. John's a big collector, too, with a particular interest in 1960s singles, acid folk and British jazz. We spend some time discussing other shops across the UK and it's clear John's been to most of them, which prompts me to head off again. Grabbing a cab, I notice the Saturday market also has a guy with a large vinyl stall. I just don't have time to linger…

The Trip

Getting there

GWR trains take just under two hours from London and leave around every 30 minutes. Temple Meads station serves trains from all over the UK. The distances between some stores are walkable at a push, but buses are easy to navigate, and I used a cab for a couple of trips. There is parking near most stores, but you may need to pay.

12 FRIENDLY RECORDS

It's the last whistle-stop visit of the day and is based in the south of the city, on Bedminster's cool North Street. Alongside T-shirts, accessories and turntables for sale, there's a good range of new and used vinyl. Tom Friend, who runs the store, buys stock, and hosts in-store sessions. It's an attractive-looking venue and I'm pleased to find some nice tote bags branded by the store that will come in handy now my plastic bags are splitting and the flight case I'm wheeling around is full. I'm out of time and almost out of cash, so I reluctantly leave without a single record, promising to come back when I haven't got a train to catch and a cashpoint allowance that's dried up.

I loved my recent trip to Brighton, but maybe Bristol is the UK's record-shop city to beat

Bristol has defeated me with its incredible range of shops and stock. I didn't even get to HMV or Fopp, or Longwell Records in Keynsham, and then there's Resolution Records in nearby Bath. I had no luck with The Cure, but could just as easily have missed a copy or failed to ask if one was lurking in a stockroom. I loved my trip crate digging to Brighton, but I'm wondering if Bristol is now the UK's record-shopping city to beat… ●

THE ESSENTIAL

40 Northern Soul Records

With obscure imported vinyl as its life blood, a group of DJs ushered in a musical movement that spread like wildfire across the north of England and beyond. Join **Rik Flynn** as he enters this curious world of enigmatic artists, reissued gems, and some slightly nefarious bootlegs. Northern Soul is a music scene like no other…

Northern Soul is a truly life-affirming musical movement and one for which vinyl was – and still is – the driving force. It's a scene that was built entirely around records and the vast majority of those exalted 45s central to the Northern scene would never have had their day were it not for one particular group of innovative soul spinners.

We're talking about those DJs who fell hard for the heavy beats and raised tempo of a particular kind of (mostly) mid-60s soul – chiefly singles that emanated from the lesser American independents. These were upbeat, uplifting records that struck a chord with a working-class audience desperate to dance away the weekly grind.

The phrase itself was first uttered by Dave Godin, owner of Soul City Records in Covent Garden and columnist for *Blues & Soul* magazine. He used the term simply to help his shop staff differentiate between the more modern soul sounds available at the time and those 1960s dance-worthy platters that were eagerly sought by punters from north of the border. Either way, the scene officially had a name…

From the late 60s and through the 70s, numerous all-nighters and club nights began to spring up across the North that commandeered local venues as hubs for the blossoming new scene.

Manchester's Twisted Wheel, Mojo in Sheffield, The Highland Room at Blackpool Mecca, The Golden Torch in Stoke, Va-Va's in Bolton and infamous dance haven the Wigan Casino, all became temporary palaces of soul at various stages in the timeline. On any given night, an army of (often drug-fuelled) soulheads would give their all out on the floor – to whichever 45s appeared in an ever-growing playlist of mood-elevating creations.

TALC OF THE TOWN

It was all about which club broke which record, and the rivalries were huge. The rarer, the more obscure the record, the more revered it was amongst the aficionados. Some of these 45s were even issued with erroneous names, to throw collectors off the scent. With intrepid DJs such as Bob Dee, Colin Curtis, Ian Levine, Kev Roberts, Richard Searling, Tony Jebb, Keith Minshull and Russ Winstanley regularly uncovering new floor-shaking sounds from across the pond, the subculture of all subcultures began to flourish.

The fashion was super-wide flares, knitted tank tops and sewn-on patches; the dance style a raucous blend of high kung-fu-style kicks, knee drops, flips and super-speed spins – often aided by a frictionless talcum-powdered dance floor.

This issue, we've taken it upon ourselves to encapsulate that fascinating world via 40 of the finest platters in existence. Any list of essential tracks is bound to cause some kind of commotion and there are certain factions of the Northern Soul community who take these things very seriously indeed. But this is about the music, not the cliques. Here, we have a selection of the 45s that soundtracked an era and while most of the famous all-nighters may have have gone – many shut down by authorities – the scene refuses to die. Numerous Northern Soul nights continue to pop up across the UK (and the world) to offer nine-to-fivers an outlet to express their passion for quality music. In the words of the devotees, Keep The Faith…

RIGHT TRACK
BILLY BUTLER
(OKEH, 1966)

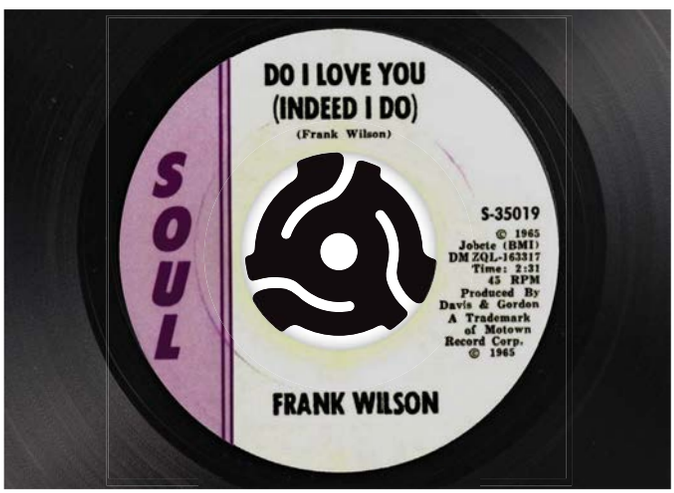
Billy shared his ample vocal talents with his older brother, Impressions main man Jerry Butler. On this, written by Chicago songwriting duo Gerald Sims and Carl Davis, Billy's pipes are in jubilant form – no wonder it was a mainstay of the emergent UK Northern Soul scene. Circling around a simple piano and guitar interplay and with a pounding beat that takes it to a truly rhapsodic crescendo, it's feelgood to the max. Though a flipside, it finally got its due when Soul City Records issued a re-release in April 1969.

I GOT TO FIND ME SOMEBODY
THE VEL-VETS
(20TH CENTURY FOX, 1967)

An illustrious stomper set in motion by a mighty guitar riff, *I Got To Find Me Somebody* was penned by Marcene 'Dimples' Harris while she was still a teenager. Driven ably by lead chanteuse Janet Terrell, LA trio The Vel-Vets appropriated it in 1967, but it wasn't until 1974 (when it was first aired at the Blackpool Mecca) that its popularity boomed. It was rebooted in the UK by PYE International almost immediately. The £1,000-plus original is virtually impossible to track down.

IT REALLY HURTS ME GIRL
THE CARSTAIRS
(RED COACH, 1973)

Written by Cleveland Horne and Raymond Evans, this mainstay was produced by Gene Rudd, who issued it through Red Coach. While it died a death on release, it was rejuvenated by DJ Ian Levine who first brought it to the UK. It was a gutsy move. An early prototype to disco, this cut straddled the gap between late-60s soul and the Philadelphia Sound of the 70s, and split his audience. The Carstairs were eventually tracked down in 1998 to perform at a Mecca reunion.



DO I LOVE YOU (INDEED I DO)
FRANK WILSON (SOUL, UNISSUED)

Arriving on these shores at the end of the 70s, this is one of the most famous Northern releases, not only because of its obvious quality, but also because it is both the rarest and most expensive 45 under the Northern Soul umbrella. Cut at Armin Steiner's Sound Recorders in LA in 1965, it was hastily archived by Motown when Wilson agreed to focus on his producer role within the label (Frank would go on to pen tunes for Mary Love, Jeanie King and The Ikettes). Only two original copies are known to exist and the last time one changed hands, it sold for just over £25,000 – the buyer was rumoured to be Wilson himself. A bootleg (pictured) surfaced in 1965.

OUT ON THE FLOOR
DOBIE GRAY (CHARGER, 1966)

Texan Gray grew up with gospel music ringing in his ears thanks to his grandfather, a baptist minister. A move to California led him to Sonny Bono (then A&R with Specialty), and Gray's initial dream to be an actor was replaced by a full-time singing career when Bono directed him towards indie label Stripe. A lane change to Cor-Dak in 1963 brought Gray his first minor strike (*Look At Me*) and a move to Charger landed mainstream hit *The "In" Crowd*, issued in 1965. Our pick landed the following year. Part of the wave of imports that flooded into the UK in the 70s, this was the finest of LA soul wired to the North. Its 1975 Black Magic reissue was a UK hit.

LONG AFTER TONIGHT IS ALL OVER

JIMMY RADCLIFFE (MUSICOR, 1965)

A talented songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist, New Yorker Radcliffe was originally lead for vocal quintet The Fascinators, until he inked a deal with Musicor and secured airplay for his own creations. This classy offering was intended as a demo for Gene Pitney, but instead remained with Radcliffe. Jimmy took the song to No. 40 in the UK in 1965, via Stateside. With the ideal title, it became the curtain call for Wigan Casino's infamous all-nighters.

I REALLY LOVE YOU

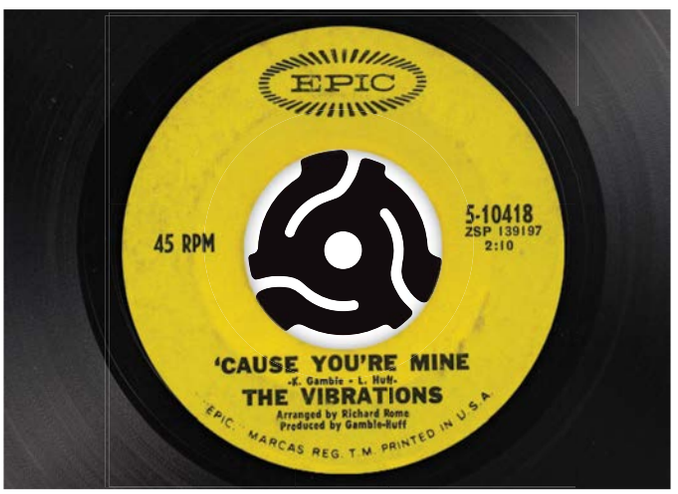
THE TOMANGOE'S (WASHPAN, 1968)

This very rare offering of slick Detroit soul was another of the Northern scene's go-to platters. While this group is another shrouded in mystery, one certainty is Detroit's primal R&B singer 'Jumpin'' Gino (not Geno) Washington produced the disc. The rumour mill has long conjectured the singer was Dusty Wilson, but Gino finally settled the matter on YouTube in 2012, when he appeared alongside Dusty Williams, the true voice of this fantastic waxing. This 45 has become hot property: one sold for £3,000 in 2016.

TAINTED LOVE

GLORIA JONES (CHAMPION, 1965)

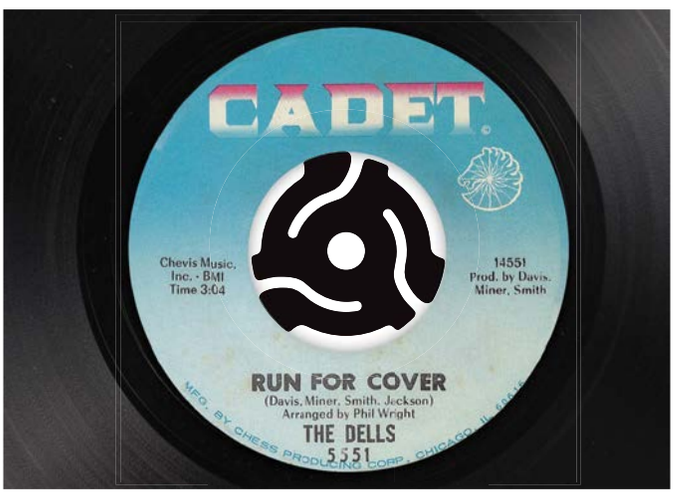
Jones was 'discovered' by songwriter-producer Ed Cobb, who wrote and produced her first two solo efforts: *Heartbeat* (Pts 1 and 2) made the charts, while *My Bad Boy's Comin' Home*, did very little. If more attention had been paid to the B-side, things may have been different. Nearly a decade later, the record reached the Wigan Casino to great acclaim, earning Jones the title of 'Queen Of Northern Soul'. She was also Marc Bolan's girlfriend, and penned various cuts for Motown's stars.



'CAUSE YOU'RE MINE

THE VIBRATIONS (OKEH/EPIC, 1968)

Various members had charted previously with both The Jay Hawks and The Marathons, but The Vibrations' first hit *My Girl Sloopy* (Atlantic, 1964) truly announced the arrival of these eventual LA soul giants. First introduced to soulies via the Blackpool Mecca, this Gamble and Huff-penned monster is brought to life via the sheer brilliance of lead vocalist Carl Fisher, never more evident than in the grooves of this classic floorfiller. "This track knocks you sideways by the fourth bar and continues to race against time, leaving you collapsed in a heap of delight," says Northern Soul guru Kev Roberts. The candid yet brilliant *I Took An Overdose* sits on the flip.



RUN FOR COVER

THE DELLS (CADET, 1966)

Chicago's The Dells were among the longest-running R&B vocal groups in history and set the bar impossibly high for all those in their wake. They made the transition from 50s doo-wop into 60s soul look effortless, and their revitalised sound served them for many years. Formed at high school as The El-Rays, the group eventually settled as a five-piece and changed their name. When Vee-Jay issued *Oh What A Nite* in 1956 (their first million-seller) it was clear The Dells were a cut above, thanks in part to the roof-lifting tenor of Marvin Junior. *Run For Cover* epitomises everything that's great about Northern Soul in its grooves – liberating, melodious and fashioned for the floor.

SEVEN DAY LOVER

JAMES FOUNTAIN (PEACHTREE, 1970)

Another Northern Soul standard that inexplicably found its way onto the flip, *Seven Day Lover* was released on Atlanta producer and songwriter William Bell's Peachtree label. During the first wave of Northern Soul, Ian Levine was the owner of the only known copy of this record. As a result, when a second 7" was outed in the mid-70s, it sold for a record price. *Fountain* is right in the pocket here, making this one colossal soul tune. Bell's ample production skills are in full force, too. The 45 was reissued by Cream in the UK in 1976, with our chosen item rightfully placed as the main attraction. Depending on condition, originals can go for over £800.

LANDSLIDE

TONY CLARKE (CHESS, 1966)

Clarke was originally employed by his mentor, Chess A&R Director Billy Davis, as an in-house songwriter. He and Davis co-wrote two minor hits for Etta James, opening the doors for Clarke to try his hand with a dozen of his own mighty waxings. Early attempt *The Entertainer* made the US Top 40 in 1965 and scored regular spins at Manchester's Twisted Wheel club, while this belter would find favour far later, in the early days of the Casino club. The demo of *Landslide* remains one of the Holy Grails of Northern Soul. Clarke was later to cameo in the movie *They Call Me Mr Tibbs!* and wrote *I Don't Care*, a UK hit for Los Lobos. He was shot dead, aged just 31.

YOU'VE BEEN AWAY

RUBIN (KAPP, 1967)

Many people would have first heard this tune on an advert for Felix cat food at some point in the 80s, but its heritage is a great deal more respectable. First issued by Kapp in the late 60s, this exceptional example is yet another with a somewhat perplexing lineage. Few people know who Rubin was and, aside from the treasures held in the grooves of this 45, plus a Billboard 'Spotlights' chart that tipped the record on release, very little else is known. The Soulies drank it in and a bootleg appeared on the Rita label in the mid-70s, while MCA cashed in on its sudden popularity soon after. *You've Been Away* is one of the finest Northern dancers and is one seriously valuable 45.

COME ON TRAIN

DON THOMAS (NUVJ, 1973)

Bronx local Charlie Ray Thomas cut his teeth in a vocal group named The Dealers, who opened for Otis Redding and James Brown. The name change came when Thomas signed up to join The Drifters in order to differentiate himself from long-time member Charlie Thomas, who had left the group. Don sang bass with the group between 1969 and 1971. After that lofty tenure, he went on to author this three-minute wonder, installed as part of the early wave of 'modern' soul tracks that landed in the scene in the 70s. The track was reissued on Vee-Jay in 1975 and – boo! – an Ian Parton remix of the track was used in a VISA ad in 2009.

GONNA BE A BIG THING

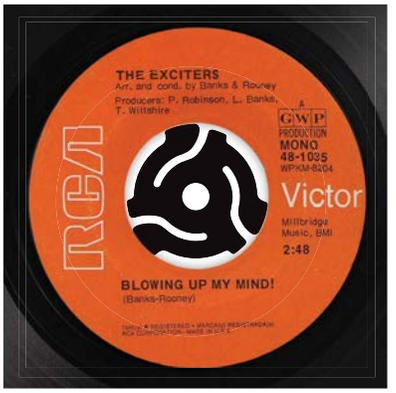
THE YUM YUMS (ABC PARAMOUNT, 1965)

Philly's superbly named Yum Yums were Nadine Felder, Jean Davis, Gwendolyn Oliver and Cassandra Ann Wooten. Their endearingly summery account of "bigger than movie love" is ambrosial stuff – and as Honey And The Bees, these angelic-voiced ladies later cut sides for both Arctic and Josie. But it's this exceptionally scant 45 that became a regular at the Blackpool Mecca. This is a must-have for Northern Soul enthusiasts, albeit at major expense…

I'M ON MY WAY

DEAN PARRISH (LAURIE, 1967)

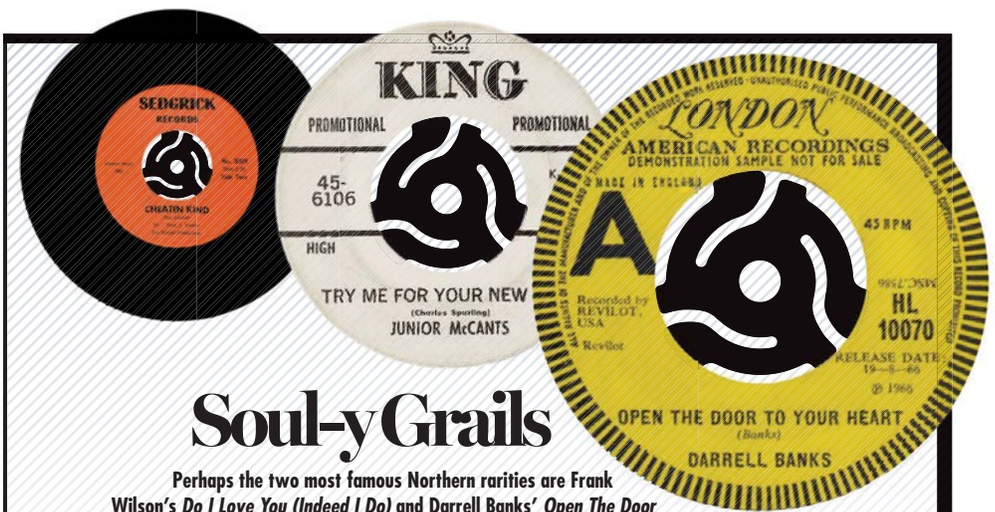
Parrish made minor in-roads with this 45 and carved out a moderate footing on the US soul circuit. By the late 60s, he'd sidelined music in favour of acting jobs. Had he known how popular he'd become across the pond (he sold over a million but remained blissfully unaware), perhaps he wouldn't have been so hasty. Unique thanks to the fuzz guitar and an unusual arrangement, this record was unearthed by DJ Russ Winstanley and holds the honour of being the last 45 played at Wigan Casino.



BLOWING UP MY MIND!

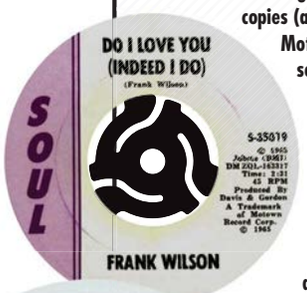
THE EXCITERS (RCA VICTOR, 1969)

With an uncommon line-up of three girls and a guy, Queens foursome The Exciters were dynamite incarnate, amply exhibited on their United Artist hits *Tell Him* (1962) and *Do-Wah-Diddy Diddy* (1963) – the former a US No. 4 hit produced by Leiber and Stoller, the latter brought to fame via Manfred Mann in '64. Spearheaded by husband-and-wife team Brenda Reid and Herb Rooney, it is on this groove-bound dancer, however, that their faculties truly come alive.



Soul-y Grails

Perhaps the two most famous Northern rarities are Frank Wilson's *Do I Love You (Indeed I Do)* and Darrell Banks' *Open The Door To Your Heart*. Only two copies are known to exist of Wilson's super-rare soul waxing, as Motown boss Berry Gordy destroyed the batch when Frank moved over from artist to songwriter for the label. Legend has it one of these hallowed 'Quality Control' copies (autographed and in a plain white sleeve) was supposedly 'borrowed' from Motown's LA archive, but never returned. It appeared at auction in 2009 and sold for an eye-watering £25,742 to an anonymous buyer (rumoured to be Wilson himself). Banks' sacrosanct offering shared a similar fate. When EMI won the rights to release *Open The Door To Your Heart* in 1966, they destroyed all copies of the original London Records pressing. Or so they thought. One sole copy surfaced and was auctioned in 2014. *RareSoulMan*'s John Manship wrote: "Not simply THE most important British Soul 45 to ever come to market. But also quite easily the most exciting record I've been in the presence of, in the whole of my record-dealing career." There are numerous mouthwatering Northern Soul rarities in circulation, but a few to look out for include Don Gardner's *Cheatin Kind*, JD Bryant's *I Won't Be Coming Back*, Junior McCants' *Try Me For Your New Love*, Mello Souls' *We Can Make It*, Frankie Beverly & The Butlers' *Because Of My Heart*, The Magnetics' *I Have A Girl* and The C.O.D's *She's Fire.*



YOU DON'T LOVE ME

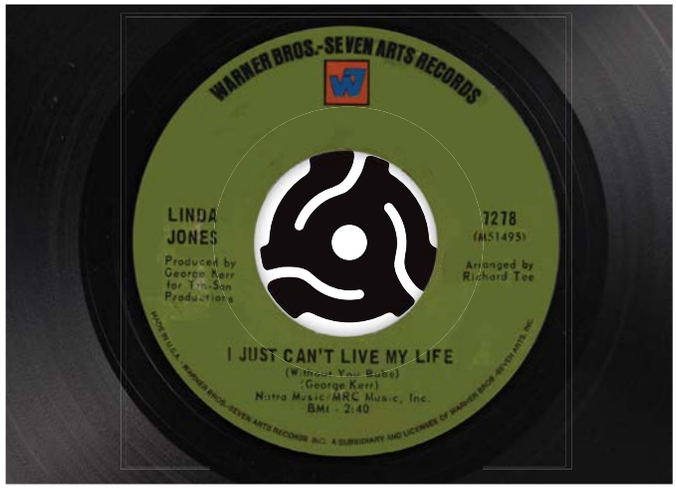
THE EPITOME OF SOUND (SANDBAG, 1968)

One of the massive Northern dancers, this essential mood elevator was initially uncovered and bootlegged in the 70s as 'Moses Smith', to befuddle collectors. The true source was a group of white New Jersey musicians fronted by Eugene Thomas, a black soul man. Robert Paladino co-wrote the music here, and produced it in a studio built within a cinema, utilising the venue's former men's room for the natural reverb. The record reached No. 11 in Cleveland… It's now worth upwards of £200.

TOO LATE

LARRY WILLIAMS & JOHNNY WATSON (OKEH, 1967)

Williams is best remembered for his fleeting – yet seismic – run of R&B sides for Specialty in the 50s, while Johnny 'Guitar' Watson is famed for his incredible chops. These two dandy cohorts came together in the mid-60s for a flamboyant communion that was occasionally sheer perfection. This B-side is one, juxtaposing lush orchestration with the tale of a cheating woman. Looking like partners in crime in the truest sense, the pair appeared on the sleeve straddling the bonnets of identical Cadillacs. While Williams was clearly a talent, tales of his excess and violent end have often overshadowed his genius.



I JUST CAN'T LIVE MY LIFE (WITHOUT YOU BABE)

LINDA JONES (WARNER SEVEN ARTS, 1969)

From the moment Ian Levine first introduced Jones' sultry sounds to the crowd of soulies at the Highland Room in Blackpool's Mecca, her legend was assured. And soul singers don't come much more talented. Author Stuart Cosgrove recalls: "When the song ended, something spontaneous and remarkable happened. Dancers would simply stop dead and clap, a resounding applause that would continue until the next record began." Renowned expert Tim Brown says her name "should be whispered with reverence whenever true fanatics meet, due to the range and the sheer melisma of her powerhouse vocals".

TIME WILL PASS YOU BY

TOBI LEGEND (MALA, 1968)

10 years as part of her mother's gospel choir served as a fine apprenticeship for this Alabaman songstress, who found early success backing everyone from BB King to Duke Ellington. Her debut appeared on Riverside in 1963, followed by several more attempts (as Tobi Lark) cut for independents Palmer, Topper and U.S.D. With no chart action, Tobi relocated to Montreal and enjoyed a change in fortunes. Shortly after, she produced this career highlight. Released on Bell subsidiary Mala, this 45 received the cold shoulder at the time, but when appropriated by the soul crowd in 1970 it became part of the 'Three Before Eight' – the tracks that closed out the Wigan Casino all-nighters.

YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME LOVE YOU

SANDI SHELDON (OKEH, 1967)

This young talent, born Kendra Spotswood, hailed from the same New Jersey neighbourhood as Clyde McPhatter and The Isley Brothers. When her soon-to-be-boyfriend, music man Van McCoy, moved in next door, sessions with The Four Buddies followed, as did her Philips debut *Can't He Take A Hint?* and follow-up *Back With My Baby* (as Kenni Woods Sheldon), before a two-year tenure with The Shirelles. She was back to her birthname for 1965's *Stickin' With My Baby,* and followed it with this Northern stomper. It bombed on release, but with breakneck beats, lavish orchestration, a timeless hook and some radiant backing vocals, it fitted the Northern mould perfectly.

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD

YVONNE BAKER (PARKWAY, 1967)

The intro bears a striking resemblance to John Barry's original *James Bond Theme* and, as a result, this is fondly referred to as such. As part of The Sensations – one of the first all-male outfits to take on a female lead, Baker had a 1962 Top Five hit with *Let Me In*, later returning to front the quartet for further 45s. As a soloist, she failed to make much of an impression, but left behind several gems, now cherished by the Northern scene. An original copy could value up to £600.

SEVEN DAYS TOO LONG

CHUCK WOOD (ROULETTE, 1967)

This track, with its exultant melody and unforgettable chorus, reached the UK in 1967 via Big T Records accompanied by an ad campaign – 'Big sound. Big thrill. Big Chuck Wood'. Yet Chuck was a one-hit wonder. Billboard noted a 'regional breakout' and it created a ripple on the East Coast, while in the pop charts it maxed out at No. 119. Vindicated by the UK soul crowd, it was reissued two more times in the 70s. Dexys covered it on their debut LP.

HIT & RUN

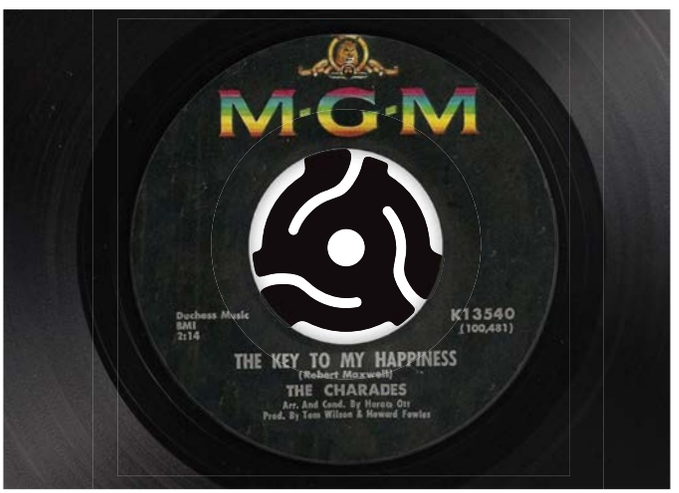
ROSE BATISTE (REVILOT, 1966)

Detroit-born Batiste was initially turned away when her mother first chaperoned her to Motown's Hitsville USA studio, but Rose continued to sing and first recorded at Continental Studios in Motor City, aged just 15. She was soon on shows including hip DJ Martha Jean's *Monday Night Swing*. Her Thelma debut did nothing and equally unsuccessful 45s followed; there was further misfortune at Revillot, when Darrell Banks' *Open The Door To Your Heart* was issued at the same time, stealing her thunder.

UNSATISFIED

LOU JOHNSON (BIG TOP, 1965)

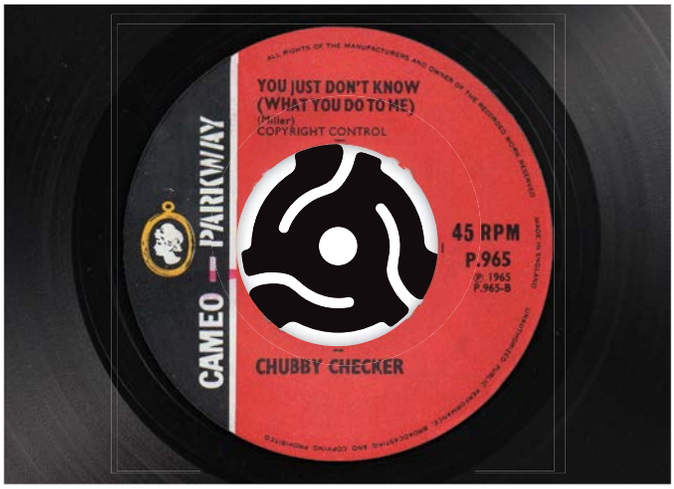
A Music Major at Brooklyn University, Johnson found local renown with gospel group The Zionettes, before crossing to the secular world with trio The Coanjos. His big break came on New York's Big Top. Several tunes emerged, but none managed a strike. An early collaboration with Burt Bacharach and Hal David fell flat, but in 1963, minor success arrived with second attempt, *Reach Out For Me*. Sadly, Big Top went bankrupt as the record took hold and it stalled. Initially cut as a demo for Dionne Warwick, *(There's) Always Something There To Remind Me* made No. 49, but while Lou may not have enjoyed the success of some of his counterparts, *Unsatisfied* is a marvel.



THE KEY TO MY HAPPINESS

THE CHARADES (MGM, 1966)

Not to be confused with the group that sang *Hammers And Sickles* in 1966, this LA act began life as The Knights, led by Cuba Gooding Sr (father of actor Cuba Gooding Jr). A name change led to1962 Northridge debut (*For You*) and recordings for a slew of others – Original Sound, Impact, Skylark, Okeh, Mercury and Fred Astaire's Ava label, before this MGM gem surfaced. Pulsing bass and piano set the scene, before the stratosphere beckons thanks to a blaring brass ensemble, sublime instrumentation and Gooding's sky-scraping top line. The Charades never received their just desserts, but Gooding would go on to 70s super-stardom with The Main Ingredient.



YOU JUST DON'T KNOW (WHAT YOU DO TO ME)

CHUBBY CHECKER (CAMEO PARKWAY,1965)

Checker grew up in Philadelphia and sung with a close-harmony group aged eight, before a private performance for Dick Clark led to his Cameo-Parkway contract. At just 18, he cut *The Twist*, the only song ever to top the Billboard chart in two different years. An upward trajectory followed with a rush of hits, but things had gone south for Chubby by the mid-60s. He offered up this syrupy number while on a 1965 London promo tour and it was only ever released on this side of the pond. The few existing US promos are worth a few bob!

SHE'S WANTED

LARRY CLINTON (DYNAMO, 1965)

Another Philly also-ran, Clinton was reportedly a temperamental individual and supposedly recorded this Northern classic while drunk. As with the vast majority of Northern records, this fizzled out without fanfare at the time of release. "When you listen to something like Larry Clinton doing *She's Wanted*, you wonder who on Earth it was recorded for," says DJ Chris King. "Who were they hoping to sell it to? How on Earth did they expect someone to dance to a 100mph stomper?" As it was, of course, these records serendipitously found favour with a new audience in Northern England, and this was once the most expensive of the lot.

GIRLS ARE OUT TO GET YOU

THE FASCINATIONS (MAYFIELD, 1967)

Initially The Sabre-ettes, this girl group was formed by Shirley Walker and Martha Reeves, the latter of whom quickly decamped to find fame fronting The Vandellas. The Fascinations, meanwhile, wouldn't fare quite as well, but enjoyed some success in Blighty. With Bernadette Boswell as their new lead, the group signed with ABC in 1962 where they met The Impressions' Curtis Mayfield, who penned their debut 45 *Mama Didn't Lie*. After several failed solo ventures, they recorded for Mayfield's new label. He fashioned this delight, with its exultant trumpets, lilting vibraphone, a killer sax break, and piano supposedly played by Donny Hathaway.

GET OUT (AND LET ME CRY)

HAROLD MELVIN AND THE BLUE NOTES (LANDA, 1965)

This quintet surfaced as The Charlemagnes in the early 50s peddling doo-wop on Philly street corners, but with Melvin installed as their leader, rose to become one of the city's leading lights. A few solid strikes early on showcased the harmony-centric Philadelphia Sound. Then piloted by John Atkins' striking falsetto, their 1956 Josie debut *If You Love Me* was a regional hit, and their first national mark, *My Hero* (No. 19 R&B, No. 78 Pop), followed a few years later on Val-Ue. *Get Out…* crept into the R&B Top 40, before Melvin recruited Teddy Pendergrass (then drummer for The Cadillacs) as lead singer in 1970.

LOOKING FOR YOU

GARNET MIMMS (UNITED ARTISTS, 1965)

Philadelphia's adopted soul hero Mimms started life singing gospel, before short terms with the Norfolk Four, The Deltones and The Gainors during the 50s. After a move to the Big Apple, Mimms and new comrades The Enchanters signed to United Artists and scored a 1963 No. 4 Billboard hit with *Cry Baby*. One more hit with The Enchanters and Mimms sought success alone, with 1964's *One Girl* and his version of The Jarmels' *A Little Bit Of Soap*. It was this effervescent side that lured the soulheads.

WHAT

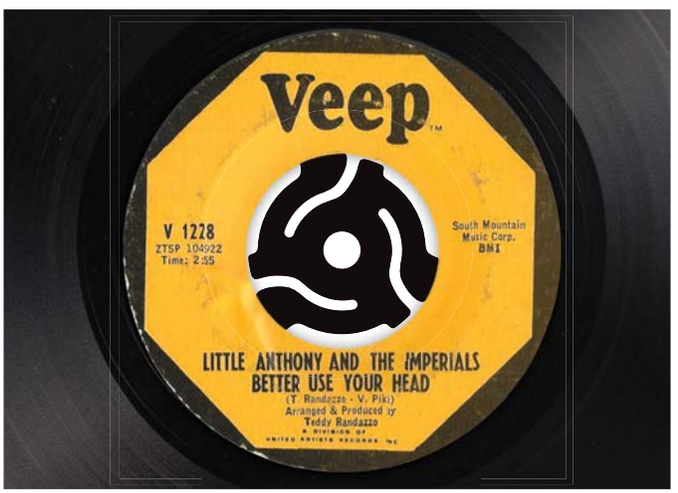
JUDY STREET (STRIDER, 1968)

Street cut her teeth on tour with her concert pianist father until, at 19, she met songwriter HB Barnum in California. One disc came of the collaboration; the flip became an emblematic Northern tune. Judy's sole session with Barnum included a full orchestra – complete with four saxes and a string section – and a rich vocal backdrop from The Blossoms. Street had no idea of her newfound status until the 90s when she saw herself on Napster. A mere 1,000 copies of the hallowed original were pressed.

SHE BLEW A GOOD THING

THE POETS (SYMBOL, 1966)

These guys were one of two New York groups with the same name hawking their wares across the city. These particular Poets cut three 45s for Juggy Murray's Sue imprint, Symbol – and this was the best. Written by Poets lead man Ronnie Lewis and finished off by Murray, this mid-60s gem embodies the summer. The single fell one shy of the R&B top spot in 1966 and entered the Top 40 pop chart. Issued in the UK as 'The American Poets', it's sugary soul dedicated to ex-girlfriends the world over.



BETTER USE YOUR HEAD

LITTLE ANTHONY & THE IMPERIALS (VEEP, 1966)

These revered Big Apple doo-woppers began their passage in 1958, when their inaugural 45 sold a cool million and made No. 4 in the Hot 100. In part thanks to a profitable partnership with producer (and childhood pal) Teddy Randazzo, Anthony and his boys managed the tricky transition into the 60s and scored several hits between 1964 and 1969, including this Northern Soul jewel. Set in motion via a near-perfect intro – and with 'Little Anthony' Gourdine's soaring falsetto in fantastic form, *Better Use Your Head* reached No. 54 in the States and scored the group their only UK hit at No. 42, when reissued in 1976.

THIS LOVE STARVED HEART OF MINE (IT'S KILLING ME)

MARVIN GAYE (TAMLA, 1995)

Marvin Gaye's Northern Soul centrepiece was cut in 1966 for Motown, but remained shelved until rescued from the vaults some time later. Another playlisted at the Wigan Casino, the track was penned by sisters Helen and Kay Lewis, who were hired as in-house songwriters for Motown. Highly regarded, the siblings inked their own Motown artist contract, too, releasing a couple of singles for the label, billed as The Lewis Sisters (The Singing School Teachers). Nothing much happened for the duo and they returned to songwriting for others – including this, the biggest Motown track ever to reach the Northern scene.

THE GIRL ACROSS THE STREET

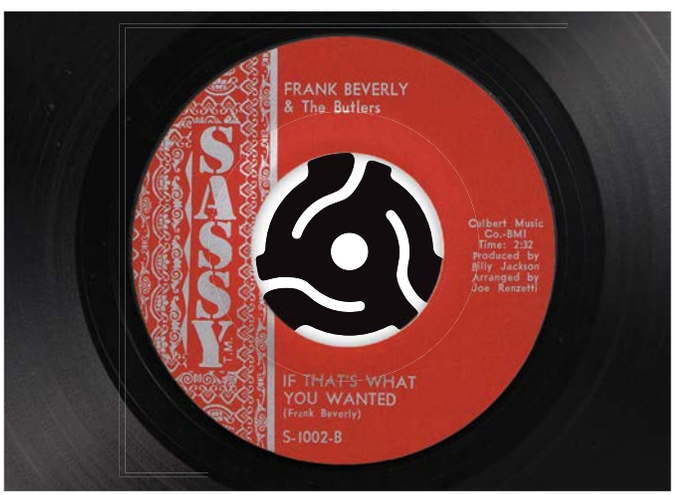
MOSES SMITH (DIONN, 1968)

Smith remains an enigmatic presence in the history of the Philly soul scene, but this anthem found favour at the Wigan Casino. Smith began singing in his early teens and won his big break at a talent contest at Philadelphia's Uptown Theater. Fortuitously for Moses, the contest was promoted by one of the city's most prominent radio DJs, Georgie Woods, whose wife Gilda headed up Dionn Records. Recorded in 1967 and issued through her label, *Girl Across The Street* managed to win 'Best Pick' in *Billboard* at the time of release. The unissued *Try My Love* (from the same session) is well worth wrapping your ears around, too, as is his only other 45, *Keep On Striving*.

STICK BY ME BABY

THE SALVADORS (WISE WORLD, 1967)

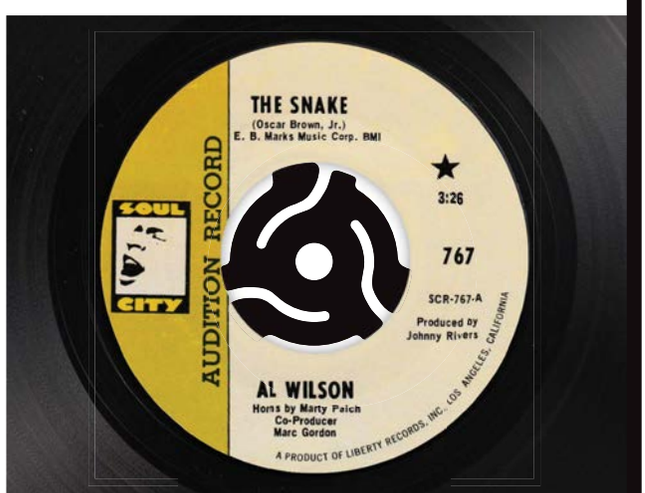
Formed in St. Louis, this four-piece's first foray was a lovable, yet ill fated 1961 doo-wop item entitled *Daddy Said*. The next definite activity came at a studio session in 1967, where this priceless pick was laid down. Written and produced by soul legend Jo Armstead and arranged by Chess sessioneer Chuck Handy, The Salvadors were in safe hands; though this marked the end of their studio activity. Don Clay put this out on his Wise World imprint: quickly seized by UK soul fans in the 70s, it was soon a floorfiller at both Wigan Casino and Blackpool Mecca. Originals can fetch up to £3,000.



IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED

FRANKIE BEVERLY & THE BUTLERS (SASSY, 1967)

Yet another prime cut from Philadelphia – via Wigan – this is a fierce dancer. Beverly claims he toured with 50s doo-woppers The Silhouettes at 12 years old; what's certain is he changed his name from Howard to Frankie (after Frankie Lymon) and he cut debut 45 (*She Tried To Kiss Me*) with The Butlers in the early 60s for Liberty Bell. Consecutive releases on Guyden, Rouser and Fairmont failed to make a dent. Several UK re-releases were circulated, but a mint Sassy original should fetch around £600. The group would work with Gamble and Huff and tour with Marvin Gaye, who initiated a name change to Maze.



THE SNAKE

AL WILSON (SOUL CITY, 1968)

Prolific singer-songwriter, civil rights activist and playwright Oscar Brown Jnr wrote this song, inspired by one of Aesop's Fables. It sat on 1963 album *Tells It Like It Is!* until it was commandeered by smooth-voiced Mississippian Wilson, who transformed it into Northern Soul perfection. Another to disappear without trace at the time, it achieved far better results when it reached No. 41 in 1975. Wilson later enjoyed a series of US hits including No. 1, *Show And Tell* (1974). Donald Trump read the lyrics to *The Snake* at his 2016 rallies to illustrate his standing on Syrian refugees – and it featured on a Lambrini ad… ●

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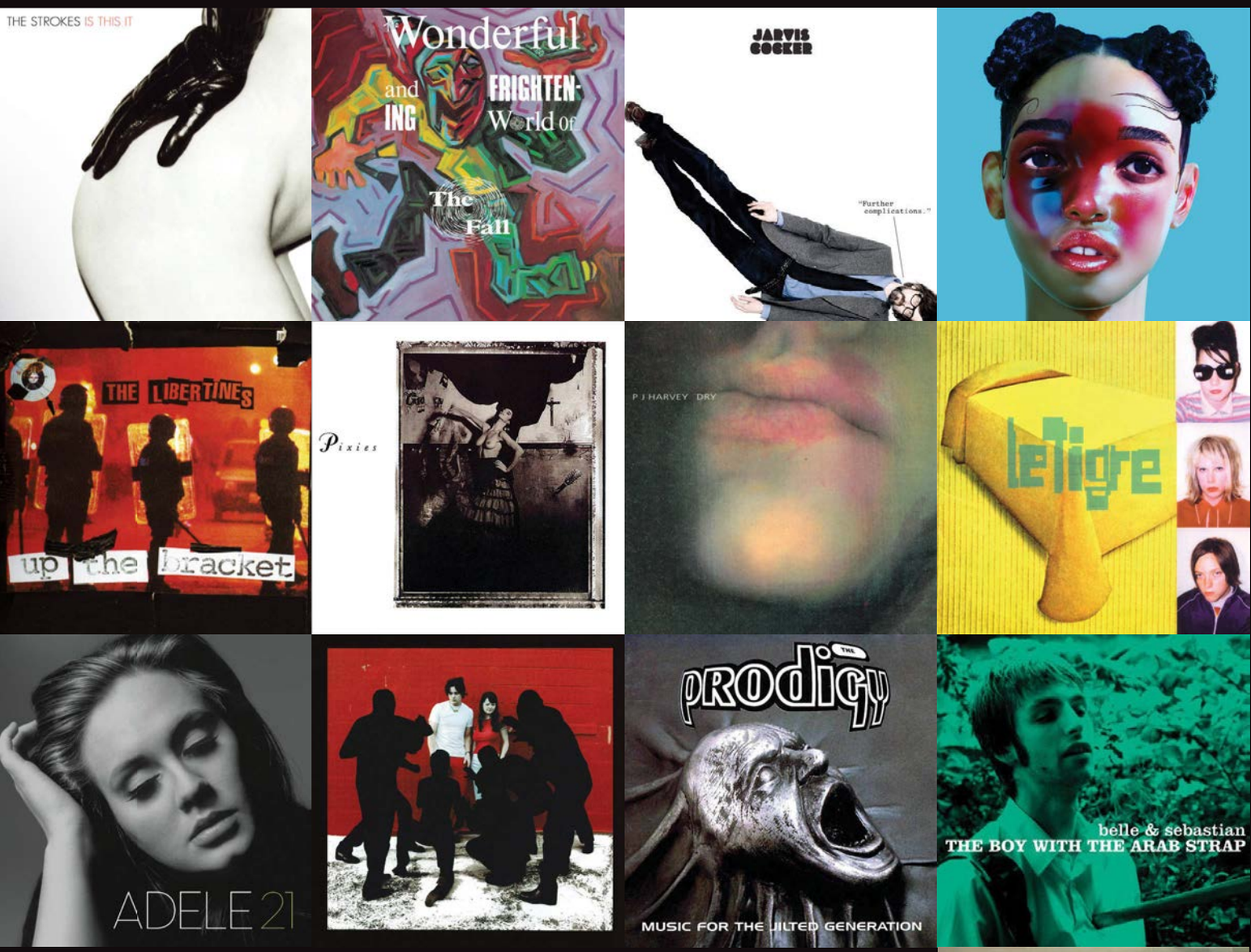
FROM BEGGARS TO KINGS

THE BEGGARS BANQUET STORY



From Gary Numan to Adele, via Pixies, The White Stripes and Radiohead… **Gareth Murphy** tells the story of a group of British indie labels who forever changed the global music business

After the still relatively recent crash of the CD industry, the embattled major labels began eating each other in what appeared to be a corporate end game. But all the while, England's biggest indie encampment has been noisily growing on the leftfield. Owned by one man, Martin Mills, the Beggars Group is the umbrella organisation that handles publicity, distribution, finance and other backline services for some of the most distinctive indie labels today – XL Recordings, 4AD, Matador, Young Turks and Rough Trade.

For an idea of what kind of weird and wonderful talent has recently emerged from around these five campfires, just think The White Stripes, The xx, M.I.A., The Libertines, Kurt Vile, Vampire Weekend, Cat Power, Antony And The Johnsons, Alabama Shakes, Bon Iver, Sleaford Mods, FKA Twigs, Future Islands, The Lemon Twigs, Warpaint… But probably the most poignant symbol of all, is that in the decade when EMI was carved up and sold to Universal and Sony, the world's most popular artist, Adele, was on the Beggars flagship, XL Recordings. Yes folks, our pop icons may be dying, but the future of British independent music is looking up.

As with all great record companies, Beggars is the sum of its experiences.

Gary Numan's success put Beggars on the map

Below The Birthday Party were an early 4AD signing

The Fall were on Rough Trade between 1983 and 1989

BECAUSE NO LABELS WERE INTERESTED, BEGGARS GOT A LURKERS 7" PRESSED UP WITH A LOGO AND SOLD IT THEMSELVES

The story started in 1971, when two college friends, Martin Mills and Nick Austin, began running a mobile discotheque. Initially called Giant Elf, they joined forces with another mobile disco called Beggar's Banquet and, through a series of mishaps, inherited the name. In 1973, Beggar's Banquet became their very own record exchange in Earl's Court, but they continued promoting events on the side, including some adventurous gigs such as Tangerine Dream at the Royal Albert Hall. Without bank loans – not even an overdraft, just a habit of operating within their means and reinvesting profits into small businesses – Mills and Austin opened a total of five more record shops over the subsequent decade, in Fulham, Ealing High Street, Richmond, Putney and Kingston.

Bauhaus went from 4AD to Beggars Banquet Records

Below The Cult's hit *She Sells Sanctuary* led to US licensing

can be even more dangerous. Pressing thousands of records required a level of cash flow that their six little shops couldn't sustain. Convinced Gary Numan was bound for glory, they kept dipping into the cash reserves to buy him synthesisers, as salary cheques started bouncing.

BASEMENT PACTS

Beggars were going bust when, just in the nick of time, Warner offered them a £100,000 advance to market and distribute the label. The shops went back to being shops, and with Warner support, the Beggars Banquet label opened up Gary Numan to a national audience. His second album, *Replicas*, in 1979, contained the UK No. 1 *Are 'Friends' Electric?* and the third album, later that year, bore his transatlantic breakthrough, *Cars* – a Top 10 in America.

With spirits high and profits rolling in, Austin and Mills agreed to give two staffers their own label. And so, Ivo Watts-Russell and Peter Kent set up 4AD, initially from behind the counter of the main Earl's Court store. "The shop stayed open until 11pm," explains Watts-Russell. "So myself, Peter, Nick and Martin would alternate shifts. I would spend most days driving to all of the shops, while Peter managed Earl's Court." Two tiny rooms in the basement served briefly as an office, but in 1980, they moved to a room above the shop, no more than 20 by 12 feet. "There were often up to eight of us, somehow entertaining potential signees and listening to their demos. For years, my chair was a propane-gas cylinder."

Despite working in each other's ears, the two record labels immediately evolved in different directions. Forged by Gary Numan's success and the Warner partnership, Mills and Austin took off on a more commercial, major-oriented route. Of the two bosses, Martin Mills was the shier, more academic personality, whereas Nick Austin was the brass-necked blagger, skilled ▶

It was punk that provided the kick up the arse to start a label. Young groups such as Generation X were rehearsing in the basement of the Fulham shop, which is how Austin and Mills began managing The Lurkers. Because no labels were interested, they simply got a Lurkers 7" pressed up with a Beggars Banquet logo and began selling it themselves. Other punk singles were self-released throughout 1977, followed by a Lurkers album that went Top 20.

But the artist who truly put Beggars Banquet on the map was Gary Numan. Originally calling himself Tubeway Army, his 1978 debut album sold out all 5,000 copies – enough to create a buzz around London. It was here, however, that Mills and Austin learned their first lesson about the record business: flops will hurt, but success

Martin Mills (second right) with Gary Numan and potentially electric friends

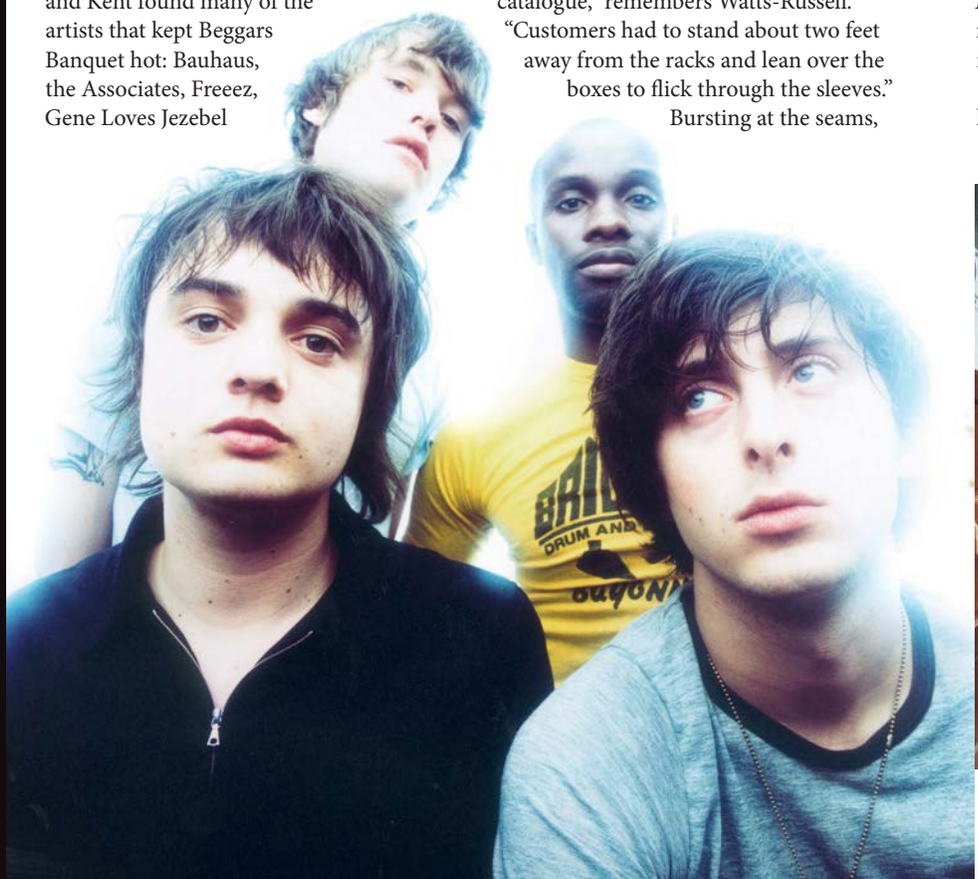
at getting his acts on TV. 4AD, on the other hand, was distributed through Rough Trade and run by twenty-something musos so single-minded that Peter Kent was quickly assigned his own imprint, Situation Two.

Mills and Austin initially imagined the two sub-labels as indie incubators that'd promote the most promising talent to the main Warner-fuelled label. The principle proved successful and Kent found many of the artists that kept Beggars Banquet hot: Bauhaus, the Associates, Freeez, Gene Loves Jezebel and the original Southern Death Cult, who later became The Cult. 4AD, however, immediately became Watts-Russell's preciously guarded baby, which he wanted to keep uncompromisingly indie. 4AD's distinctive sonic and visual identity was quickly forged by Modern English, Cocteau Twins, The The, Colourbox and The Birthday Party, featuring a young Nick Cave.

"Downstairs, beneath the quad-album racks, was where I stored all of the 4AD catalogue," remembers Watts-Russell. "Customers had to stand about two feet away from the racks and lean over the boxes to flick through the sleeves."

Bursting at the seams, in 1983, Mills and Austin turned a house in Wandsworth into a proper office and warehouse. Sharing the same reception and backline services, each imprint had its own individual space and staffers. The Situation Two imprint quickly fell into relative dormancy when Kent left, but 4AD had an identity sufficiently 'collective' in character to enable Watts-Russell to call on some of the label's artists to collaborate as This Mortal Coil. Their 1984 debut album, *It'll End In Tears*, embodied what people today regard as the '4AD sound' – almost a genre in itself.

In the other rooms, Nick Austin began his own imprint, Coda, specialising in



jazz-funk and new-age music; whereas on the main Beggars Banquet label, Martin Mills was focusing on Bauhaus, Tones On Tail and The Cult. Following a string of goth stompers throughout 1984, The Cult detonated the explosive *She Sells Sanctuary* in 1985 – an instant hit in the UK, which led to a major licence deal in America.

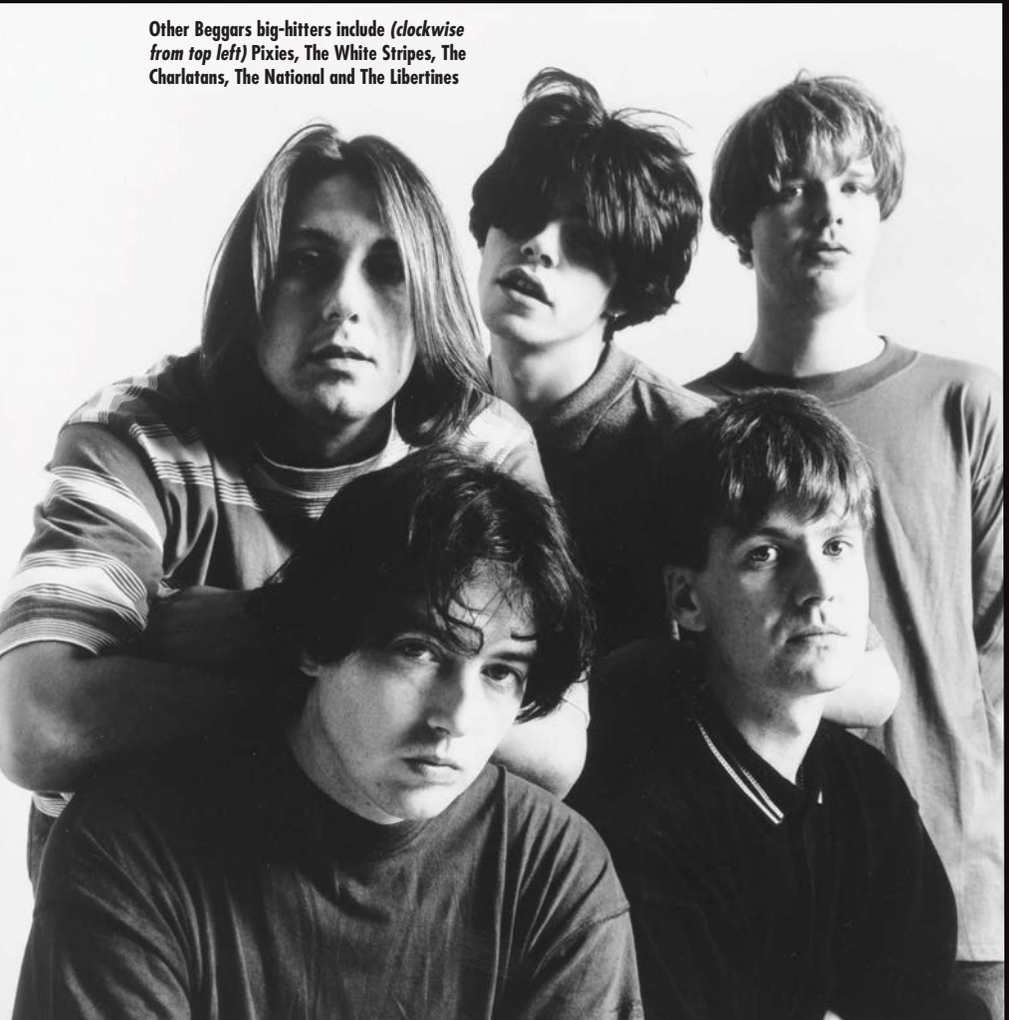
Dance music's origins were intertwined with the post-punk scene and, in 1987, elements of Colourbox produced *Pump Up The Volume*, under the M|A|R|R|S moniker, a million-unit genre-buster for 4AD that heralded the oncoming rave explosion. Celebrating the windfall, Watts-Russell moved his staff into a refurbished nunnery next door. And thus the Beggars Group continued growing, as neighbouring houses along the residential Alma Road. "You have no idea how nice it was to be separate," says Watts-Russell. "I actually lived above the office for a few months." Thanks to the Pixies, Cocteau Twins, Dead Can Dance, Throwing Muses and other acts, 4AD were enjoying such sustained popularity, they even opened a small New York office.

JUKEBOX JURY

Alas, for the company owners, what had begun as musical differences had grown into a problematic rift. Increasingly isolated, both musically and personally, Austin sold his shares to Mills in 1987 and launched The Landscape Channel, a video station for new-age music. Conceptually, Austin's idea was probably ahead of its time, but he lacked the ears to find the right content. Running out of money within a year, he sued Mills for more. "It was the big fall-out of my life," confesses Mills, "and it put me hugely into debt." Despite the success of The Cult, The Fall, The Charlatans and others, a dark cloud hung over the company, at a time when 4AD appeared to be eclipsing its parent label.

To finance his three months in court, Mills had to dip into 4AD's cash reserves, but felt so guilty about it, he gave half of the label's shares to Watts-Russell. In March 1990, the judge ruled in Mills' favour: "You could see this enormous weight being lifted from Martin's shoulders," recalled Watts-Russell. "In the pub afterwards, we all had tears in our eyes." But then, just a year later, another crisis hit when Rough Trade's distribution system collapsed. For scores of indies such as 4AD, hundreds of thousands of pounds were lost in debt, threatening a tidal wave of bankruptcies across Britain's music business. As indie bosses screamed in endless crisis meetings, Mills and others calmly won majority support to set up a new distribution company, RTM, whose profits paid off everyone's debts within 18 months.

Although the golden age of indie had died with Rough Trade, Watts-Russell acknowledges: "Martin deserves credit for single-handedly saving independent distribution." Nothing, however, could stop the march of the majors and, with them, the rising tide of corporate pop-rock. Few indies remember the 1990s with much fondness, least of all the 4AD founder, who recalls sitting in Mills' Richmond garden,



Other Beggars big-hitters include *(clockwise from top left)* Pixies, The White Stripes, The Charlatans, The National and The Libertines

FOR THE OWNERS, WHAT HAD BEGUN AS MUSICAL DIFFERENCES GREW INTO A PROBLEMATIC RIFT

ADELE'S GAZILLION-POUND SUCCESS HAS CERTAINLY HELPED

feeling utterly burnt out in hostile times. Experiencing what he now recognises was some kind of mid-life breakdown, Watts-Russell sold his half of 4AD to Mills and retired to New Mexico – with no regrets that he bowed out with his love of music intact.

Tougher, wiser and growing into a leader, Mills carried the combined experiences of 4AD and Beggars Banquet into the digital age. "Ivo led me into a less 'establishment' view of music as a business," says Mills, who now realises that, in his early years, he'd been influenced too much by outside professional advice. "Ivo showed me how relationships with artists can work on a symbiotic level, with shorter contracts and fewer obligations – more of a partnership. And he also showed us the importance of being determined about artistry, of being a perfectionist, of refusing to let commercial issues get in the way of the art."

These values laid the foundations of the modern Beggars Group, which entered a new chapter during the 90s – a time when other labels tended to be selling out to majors rather than doubling down as indies.

The big surprise turned out to be Mills' dance label, XL Recordings, which quickly exploded into the group's third madhouse. Driven by a young DJ named Richard Russell, its first major discovery was The Prodigy, whose 1994 thunderbolt, *Music For The Jilted Generation*, propelled the whole company into the 21st century. Then came Basement Jaxx, The White Stripes, M.I.A., Electric Six, Dizzee Rascal, Vampire Weekend and many other brilliant originals. XL has become such a reference inside the business, established names such as Radiohead, Beck, Peaches, Gil Scott-Heron, Sigur Ros and Damon Albarn have come from other labels.

GOING GLOBAL

Some hot labels have been joining the group, too. In 2002, Beggars bought into Matador, the American indie that's been behind the likes of Belle And Sebastian, Cat Power and Kurt Vile. Then came Young Turks, currently home to The xx, SBTRKT and FKA Twigs. And in 2008, the resuscitated and arguably better-than-ever Rough Trade joined the group, completing the circular

Industry icon Martin Mills is a true believer in the DIY ethos

The Beggars Group's strength in depth *(clockwise from top left)* The Prodigy, Bon Iver, Queens Of The Stone Age, Adele and Sleaford Mods

journey back into record stores and post-punk guitar music.

In many respects, then, Beggars has been an answer to the record crash. With branches in New York, Los Angeles, Ontario, Paris, Hamburg, Milan, Brussels, Amsterdam, Athens, Beijing and Tokyo, the Beggars Group is now a global operation plugged into the world's best independent distributors and record shops. Beggars was already a big hitter; but Adele's gazillion-pound success over the last decade has certainly helped ensure that both XL and the parent company will remain flush for years to come.

Aged 67, Martin Mills is now the godfather of the indie world. The secret to his success? Doing what you believe in and doing it yourself – he doesn't even have a personal assistant. For Mills, being truly independent means never borrowing money off banks – Beggars is entirely self-financed. Modest and approachable, he's very much a community man; he comes to gigs, he answers everyone's emails, he's set up indie lobbies and, according to rumour, he's long been helping labels in distress. The majors constantly tell us how the business should be put to the service of the music, while in reality, their business-schooled staffers keep churning out product to make profits.

The difference with the Beggars labels is that they're genuinely run by and for discerning music people – and the proof is in the product. At the end of the day, record labels are really no different from businesses anywhere else in life; you will know them by their fruits. ●

AT HOME WITH PAT NEVIN

The Scottish international footballer Chelsea fans knew and loved as Wee Pat is also a fanatical vinyl collector. **Gary Walker** visits his Berwick home to hear about a life dedicated to records…

He played 28 times for Scotland and made more than 600 appearances during an illustrious professional career that saw him line up for Everton and Chelsea and play in an FA Cup Final before hanging up his boots to become a TV pundit celebrated for his cerebral analysis of the sport. Yet despite devoting four decades of his life to football, Pat Nevin has never loved the beautiful game as much as he loves vinyl.

Influenced by his older siblings, Nevin developed a deep-rooted passion for records in his childhood that would see him go on to collect thousands of albums and seven-inches, befriend legendary DJ John Peel, become a DJ himself, and even leave a professional football match he was playing in at half-time to go to a gig at London's Royal Festival Hall.

Nevin was a rarity in the football world – an intellectual stimulated by art, literature and most of all, music. His vinyl-collecting journey began in his home city of Glasgow in the 1970s, with the sounds of prog giving way to punk and post-punk, before a move to the bright lights of London saw him sharing a flat with *NME* writer Adrian Thrills and becoming best mates with Cocteau Twin and Bella Union founder Simon Raymonde. However, despite that enviable musical CV, Nevin admits to being embarrassed about the first record he bought.

"I inherited a lot of good stuff from my older brothers and sisters, but I have to be honest, the first

Portraits: Mark Alexander

Go-Betw
PAT NEVIN
aztec camera
67
AT HOME WITH
allo darlin'
Wild Swan
CAMERA OBSCURA

album I bought was a double concept album by Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. In those days, I liked a lot of Pink Floyd and Genesis. I wasn't a total prog fanatic, but I did like Yes, too.

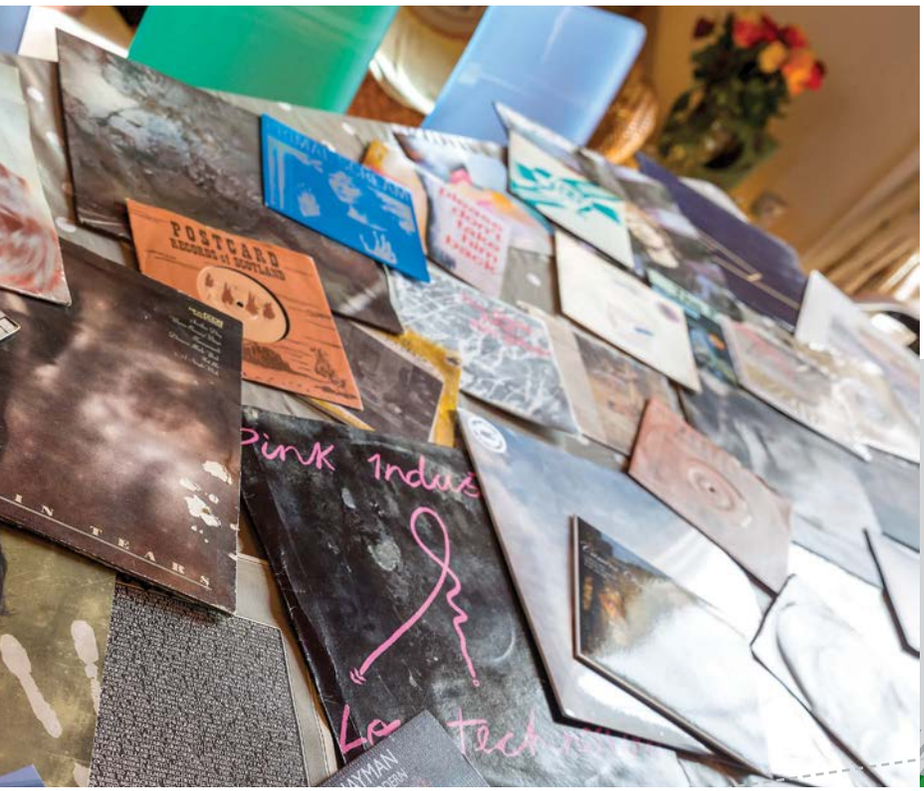
"Quite soon after that, when I was 14 or 15, punk began to happen and I started to listen to John Peel's show. I remember the days when Peel's *Festive 50* was part *Stairway To Heaven* and part *Anarchy In The UK*. A lot of people my age were like that. It was maybe more late punk and post-punk when I got involved, going to see a lot of bands and buying lots of vinyl.

"John Peel was kind of my hero. I didn't have football heroes, oddly enough. I liked football, and I supported Celtic and admired the players' skills, but it wouldn't have crossed my mind to have a picture of a footballer on my wall. I was into literature and music and there were pictures of bands on my wall."

As the 80s dawned, Nevin discovered Factory Records, eagerly collecting Joy Division and later New Order records, and he was already juggling his burgeoning footballing career with immersing himself in the flourishing Glasgow music scene.

"The first real punky band I liked was Siouxsie And The Banshees, and I just missed seeing Joy Division live," he says ruefully. "One of the big moments I remember was buying the original 12" of *Ceremony* by New Order, which was a massive piece of vinyl for me – I bought it just after *Atmosphere* by Joy Division, and to this day, they're two of my most treasured pieces of vinyl – I still love them to death… early Cocteaus, any of the stuff by the Associates sounds beautiful on vinyl; Belle And Sebastian and Camera Obscura is all brilliant on vinyl, my Postcard Records stuff… I love the artwork, too. I love the artwork from Factory Records, and every piece of Durutti Column vinyl – I would die for that on a desert island, it's so perfect on vinyl, all the 4AD stuff, too…

"I was a complete fanatic of Bowie as well. The Berlin years – *Heroes* and *Low*. I could see a crossover where you could absolutely adore Bowie and love Joy Division and The Cure and bands that were coming through in Glasgow, too, like Johnny And The Self Abusers, who became Simple Minds… Every time a Simple Minds single or album came out, they were bought the day they came out. *Empires And Dance* and the first



"CHELSEA ASKED ME IF I'D WRITE A COLUMN FOR THE CHELSEA FC NEWSPAPER. I SAID, 'AS LONG AS IT'S A MUSIC COLUMN, 'CAUSE I KNOW BUGGER ALL ABOUT FOOTBALL'"

PAT NEVIN

couple of Simple Minds albums were great, and then the Postcard Records stuff started happening. Early Aztec Camera… I loved Altered Images, partly because of the music, partly because of another reason – which is odd, because I ended up going out with Clare [Grogan, the band's singer]. I became a huge record collector. I was playing football, I was also a student, it was a brilliant period of my life."

JOHN PEEL'S WINGMAN

After moving to the capital in 1983 to join Chelsea for £95,000, Nevin, by now sharing a flat with *NME* writer Adrian Thrills, struck up a friendship with John Peel that saw him acting as a secret, unofficial, unpaid production assistant on the the legendary DJ's BBC show.

"I moved down to London, which was great for me, because all the bands played in London," says Nevin, quick to return the conversation to music. "I'd started writing when I was a student, so Chelsea asked me if I'd write a column for the Chelsea FC newspaper. I said, 'Okay, as long as it's a music column because I know bugger all about football.'

"I didn't have a great interest in it. I didn't go and watch it a lot – my love of it was artistic, so I was a Chelsea player but I'd go and watch Spurs and stand on The Shelf [the infamous old terrace frequented by the Spurs hardcore, Ed] every Wednesday night to watch Ossie Ardiles, Micky Hazard and Glenn Hoddle. I've never been very tribal about football, but I am about music.

"I was writing the column and I thought, 'Why don't I interview John Peel?'. I wrote him a nice letter saying I worked for a little newspaper in West London and asked for an interview. I got a lovely reply a week or two later saying he was very busy and maybe another time. So, the one time in my life I've done a subtle namedrop, I wrote back and said the reason I'd like to do the interview soon was that I played for Chelsea and we were playing against John's team, Liverpool, in three weeks.

"Two days later, the phone goes. It's John and he says, 'Why didn't you say?!'. We met up, the interview went great and from then on, we used to meet up at gigs all the time. I'd quite often go on the show, and we had a gentlemen's agreement he never mentioned I was on. He'd say, 'We've got a famous footballer in tonight,' and I'd go in and help out, take the bands' details to pay their royalties, and that sort of thing – we just became really great friends. I didn't do it all the time, because I didn't want to be a pest, but we were a great group of friends, and I thought it

"I'D BRING IN VINYL FOR ONE OR TWO... I MADE MIXTAPES FOR GRAEME LE SAUX, AND PAUL CANOVILLE WAS INTO SOME HEAVY DUB REGGAE"

PAT NEVIN

was important to have a completely different life away from football, as it can take over your life."

The friendship with Peel endured through the years and Nevin, having retired and taken up a job as an expert pundit for Channel 5 and the BBC, was always invited to the DJ's legendary landmark birthday parties, never making it due to work commitments – until Peel's 55th.

"Sheila [Peel's wife] phoned and said, 'Are you coming this time?'. My favourite band at the time, Camera Obscura, were playing. I came off the phone and spoke to my wife and realised I'd organised to do a charity golf competition in Scotland on the Friday morning and the Saturday morning – and John's party was the Friday night. How the hell could I do it? My wife said, 'You can't, you'll have to phone Sheila back.' I said, 'I've got to be there. I don't know what it is, but I have to be there.' I'm not a wealthy ex-footballer, but I said, 'I've got to be there, even if I have to charter a private plane, I'm going to be there.' She said, 'You're nuts, you're off your head.' I worked out I could finish the golf, fly to Stansted by three, get to the party, stay 'til midnight and be back on the golf course by nine the next morning. It was the most brilliant night, Camera Obscura were great, John was the best I've known him… John was painfully shy, but that night the shyness wasn't there, he was like John on the radio, in his element.

"Delia Smith was there, she was great friends with John, and we all had a great laugh. I flew home, and John was dead two weeks later. I'd lost a friend and a hero. My wife said to me, 'You've never said anything like that, about needing to be somewhere,' and I'm not spiritual or anything like that, but my whole body was telling me to be there that night. One of the last sessions he did was The Fall. I'm a Fall fanatic. I remember going to buy the new album, *Fall Heads Roll* with *Blindness* on it, and thinking, 'This will be the last time I ever go and buy a piece of vinyl recommended to me on Peel's show.' He was such a massive part of my life. I was really upset, and the guy behind the counter was looking at me as if I was nuts."

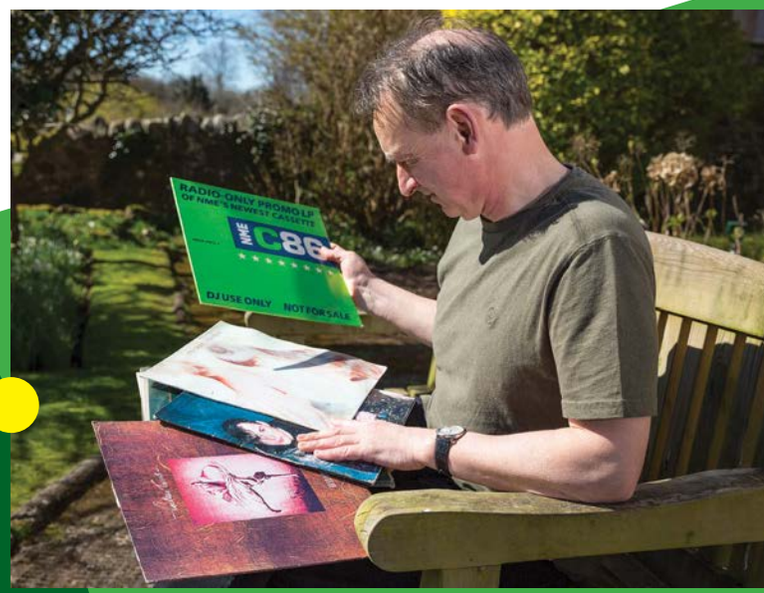
With Nevin, who has an art degree from Glasgow Caledonian University, more interested in collecting art and vinyl than gambling and drinking, and being more of a fan of Belle And Sebastian than Phil Collins, record shopping was never a passion he shared with his teammates. "I'd sometimes bring in vinyl for one or two of them," he says. "I made a few mixtapes for Graeme Le Saux, and Paul Canoville was into some heavy dub reggae, but there weren't many who knew much about music.

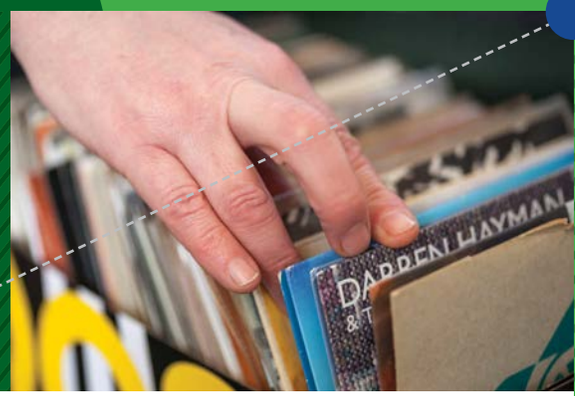
Getty Images

BLUE (MONDAY) IS THE COLOUR...

During Nevin's time at Chelsea, in the midst of negotiations with manager John Neal and the club's infamous chairman Ken Bates over his new contract, he took the incredible step of asking to be left out of the squad for a match against Brentford in order to go to a gig.

"My memory is a bit messy about this," Nevin recalls. "I can't remember if it was the Cocteau Twins or New Order, at the Royal Festival Hall. It was a friendly just before the start of the season, I'd done pre-season and I was phenomenally fit, as I was a distance runner as well – fitness was never a problem. I was signing my new contract at the time. Just before signing, I said to the manager, 'I'll sign it except for one thing – I don't want to play in Monday night's game. There's a band on I want to see!'. He said, 'You must be joking!'. Anyway, we worked it out and came to an agreement that I could leave at half-time. The chairman at the time, Ken Bates, thought I was a lunatic. They didn't know how to deal with me, as I didn't have an agent and wasn't desperate to be a professional footballer – I could just go back and finish my degree if I wanted to…"





"I remember as a kid at Celtic Boys Club, at 14 or something, bringing in a new album by a band I liked, and them saying, 'That's shit, get it off!', and that album was U2's first record, which of course went on to become classic footballers' music!

"My best friend in London was Simon Raymonde. *Head Over Heels* is still one of my favourite pieces of vinyl, and I've got a note written on it from Liz and Robin – they never even wrote lyrics on the albums they did! They played at the LSE and Simon was in the crowd. A few months later, he joined the Cocteau Twins and we bumped into each other before the gig, and for two or three years, we met every day."

FLYING WINGER

With his commentary work carrying him all over the UK and beyond, Nevin's vinyl obsession continues, and he's a regular guest DJ at cool London club night Scared To Dance.

"Sadly, I can never DJ with vinyl," he says. "I have to travel so far to get to Dalston where I DJ, and to take that amount of vinyl on a flight would be impossible. It's a brilliant night – it starts out at Belle And Sebastian and stuff like that and it gets quite wide, I play all sorts. Sometimes, there are people there a lot younger than me who don't know what it is I'm playing!

"There's a lot of stuff on Fortuna POP! right now that I love, and a lot of the vinyl I buy now is Fortuna POP!. The sad thing is the label is no more, as of this month. The vast majority of stuff on Fortuna POP! is great. I don't buy anything for value, I collect vinyl in the same way as I collect paintings – because I like the work and the artist. My decision making is usually if they're bands I like and they need the money, I'll buy the vinyl."

Despite his lifetime's love affair seeing Pat amass a vast collection of vinyl, disaster struck a few years ago when mother nature conspired to destroy most of his collection. However, he's keen to put an event that would have driven many collectors to depression into perspective. "Seven or eight years ago, I had a flood at my house in the basement, where all the LPs were," he remembers. "I was away at the time, and about 70 per cent of it was flooded. It flooded, then dried and then heated, so a lot of it was destroyed beyond use. It had no effect on me, though, because the day before that I'd lost someone very close and dear to me – they died, and it put losing the record collection in ultimate perspective. Had it happened the week before, I'd have been in despair, but I put it in perspective. Life's too short…" ●

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Dropkick Murphys
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ALL SPILLERS, NO FILLER

SPILLERS RECORDS, CARDIFF

Established in 1894 and hailed as the oldest record shop in the world, this family-run store in a Victorian arcade is expanding and opening a new upstairs area. **Laura Williams** investigates

"In order to have the money to go to the cinema you can either, I quote, 'clean out the shit in the chicken shed or come to the shop and help me'," recalls Spillers Records' owner Ashli Todd, referring to the moment her dad welcomed her into the family business. "Needless to say, I went to the shop and helped him." Ashli's dad Nick started managing the Cardiff shop in the 70s and went on to become the owner, before passing the mantle on to his daughter Ashli, who continues to put 60-plus hours a week into the shop.

Ashli, who took the reins in 2010, reminisces about those early days: "I was let loose on the customers properly at the age of 16. I really got a buzz out of working face-to-face and interacting with people, recommending things to people. It helped grow my own obsession with music, too.

"People always assume my musical influences came from my dad, but he was in the shop all the time, so it was actually my mum's influence. We never had the 'birds and the bees' chat in my house, just listening to Prince records and it was like, 'Mum, what does cream on top of mean?'. We were singing along to some quite lewd lyrics and she'd come up with some very imaginative explanations!"

Like many other children of the 70s, 80s and 90s, John Peel also played a crucial role in those formative years. "I remember being 12 and listening to his show," says Ashli. "I was always writing down singles that John Peel was playing. I would then go into the shop on a Saturday with my little notes and find out that these were invariably from self-releasing labels with handmade covers – and I'd try and order them in when I could, for the shop and because I was interested in them."

Around the time that John Peel departed for a higher plane in 2004, vinyl was going through a tough time and it was only Ashli and her sister Grace's intervention that kept records on the racks at Spillers. She said: "About 12 years ago, my dad was considering stopping selling vinyl in the shop, because sales had plummeted so much and so little was being produced. At that time, having just gotten into it, it was a really seductive format to me and my sister, and we were like, 'No, it'll make a comeback, people are getting more into it, stick with it.'

"Everyone mentions the vinyl revival, but it didn't ever go away completely. It was the industry that said vinyl was dead. They said, 'You don't need this large format, CDs are the future – you can put it in the toaster and it's indestructible'. People bought into that, not the vinyl fanatics and the labels who made it, but everyone else. That's why it took a huge dip for a while, but it definitely didn't go.

"Unlike the high-street shops, who did a slick refit, independent record shops up and down the country were saying, 'There is space for vinyl and damn it, we will make it fit'.

"I don't buy into this IKEA living, where you have to have a streamlined life and stuff is bad. Sure, you can have your entire book collection and music collection on two little devices and lead

> "YOU CAN HAVE YOUR ENTIRE BOOK COLLECTION AND MUSIC COLLECTION ON TWO LITTLE DEVICES… I SEE A SHELF OF BOOKS OR VINYL AND I REALLY WANT TO DIVE INTO THAT – YOU DON'T REALLY GET THE SAME FEELING SCROLLING THROUGH A DEVICE"
>
> **ASHLI TODD**

All pictures Eleanor Jane

> I REALLY LIKE THE IDEA OF INVOLVING SOME OF THE REGULARS IN THE NEW UPSTAIRS SPACE, MAYBE HAVING A LISTENING POST WITH THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS, NOT JUST STAFF ONES. IT'S LIKE A BIG WHOLE EXTENDED FAMILY
>
> **ASHLI TODD**

a bleak and uninspiring life; I see a shelf of books or vinyl and I really want to dive into that – you don't really get the same feeling scrolling through a device."

Spillers Records, named after founder Henry Spiller, was and is a family business. But this family isn't confined to the blood relatives who run the shop; it includes staff past and present and, of course, customers.

"The whole thing is not my shop or the people who work here's shop," Ashli explains. "It's our shop. It still totally feels like a family business, my mum comes in and brings cakes in for the staff and she's going to be making the cushion covers for our seating area upstairs. The Spillers family, to whom I am not related, they still pop in when they're in town, but they're spread all over the world now – Canada, Austria, West Wales.

"What we stock is guided by what people coming to the shop steer us towards. I really like the idea of involving some of the regulars in the new upstairs space, so like maybe having a listening post with their recommendations, not just staff recommendations. It's like a big whole extended family."

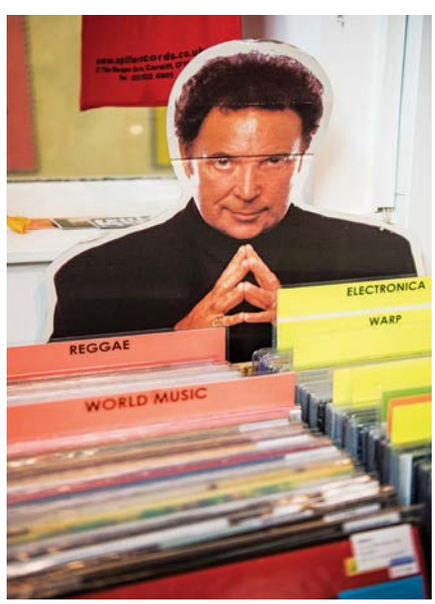
This ethos was in evidence a decade ago, when Spillers was threatened with closure after its landlord doubled the rent. A huge campaign was launched, supported by some big names in music such as Manic Street Preachers, which resulted in Spillers moving to a new location in the city's Morgan Arcade. The current site is a few doors down from that shop and Ashli says it's all worked out for the best: "At the end of the day, the landlord was running a business and it was obviously worth that amount to someone. I don't have any hard feelings. We moved to this lovely arcade and the rent is more manageable and realistic. It's lovely, because we're surrounded by like-minded businesses. We feel relatively secure here, but I think anyone is talking out of their arse if they say they're going to be around forever – you just don't know."

The same uncertainty is true for Record Store Day, and when we visit Spillers, they are preparing to open the upstairs space for the first time for this year's event. Ashli remains cautiously optimistic. "It's always an anxious 24 hours," she says. "Queueing usually starts around two o'clock in the morning, which is such amazing dedication. Last year, there was one man queueing from 6pm the day before. I felt like saying, 'If you want to help us with all this stuff, then come on in'. He had a camping chair and his work with him, he seemed to be an architect and had lots of architectural drawings. Thankfully, it was nice weather. That's the thing, it tends to piss it down and that has a huge bearing on people's desire to want to join in."

During our visit to Spillers, the staff are in the midst of ordering for RSD 2017.

"I got the last order in 40 seconds before deadline," reveals Ashli, a relentless multitasker who does 90 per cent of the ordering, leaving the other four members of staff to focus on serving people; although the 33-year-old gets involved in that, too – an interesting experience as a would-be freedom fighter. "I always told my mum it's a good job I have this shop, because otherwise I'd probably be getting arrested or something. I'd go off and be some sort of freedom fighter. Though we probably need more freedom fighters at the moment."

Ashli recalls a recent run-in with a Donald Trump supporter in the shop: "Mum went on an anti-Trump demo and she had the banner in the shop, and I'm really pleased to say that it took about six weeks before a negative comment happened; a man said, 'Don't you know that there are some people who agree with what Trump says?' And I was like, 'Well, I personally believe that all humans are equal'. He wasn't one of



the nicest customers, if I'm honest, aside from thinking Trump was great. He had a Spillers gift token, bought a T-shirt and refused to have the change, which was a fiver. He said, 'Keep it and give it to one of your liberal charities or a homeless person,' so we did – we gave it to a homeless person.

"I was talking to a rep about it afterwards and he said, 'Oh, you've got to be careful, because you're a shop'. Do you know what? For the greater happiness of myself and my staff, I'd rather not have people bringing their negative vibes into the shop. I don't believe in making money enough to compromise saying 'no' to crap. Music is so tied up with politics, I think I can say 'No To Trump' in my own shop."

The Trump supporter isn't the only customer who has underestimated Ashli; as a female member of staff at Spillers, Ashli is sometimes overlooked as the fount of knowledge that she so clearly is. "People expect a man to run a record shop and there are so many enquiries that are directed more towards the boys in the shop. You'll be talking to customers saying, 'Oh, did you know about that version or such-and-such a side project?' and it won't be to show off, it will be like, 'You need to know

SPILLERS TIMELINE

How the shop has evolved over 123 years

1894 Established in the Queen's Arcade in Cardiff by Henry Spiller, selling phonographs and associated equipment

1920s Henry's son Edward takes over the running of the shop and introduces musical instrument sales as well as pre-recorded music

1940s Spillers moves to a new location in The Hayes, the then-secondary shopping area of Cardiff

1970s Nick Todd starts working as manager of Spillers

1984 Spillers celebrates its 100th anniversary

1980s Nick takes over as owner of Spillers

1997 A 13-year-old Ashli Todd starts working at Spillers, helping her dad Nick

2000s Nick considers dropping vinyl from the shelves, but is talked out of it by Ashli

2006 'Save Spillers Records' campaign launched as the store's landlord doubles the rent; the campaign receives support from thousands of people, including Bruce Springsteen, Beyoncé and the Manic Street Preachers

2007 Record Store Day launches

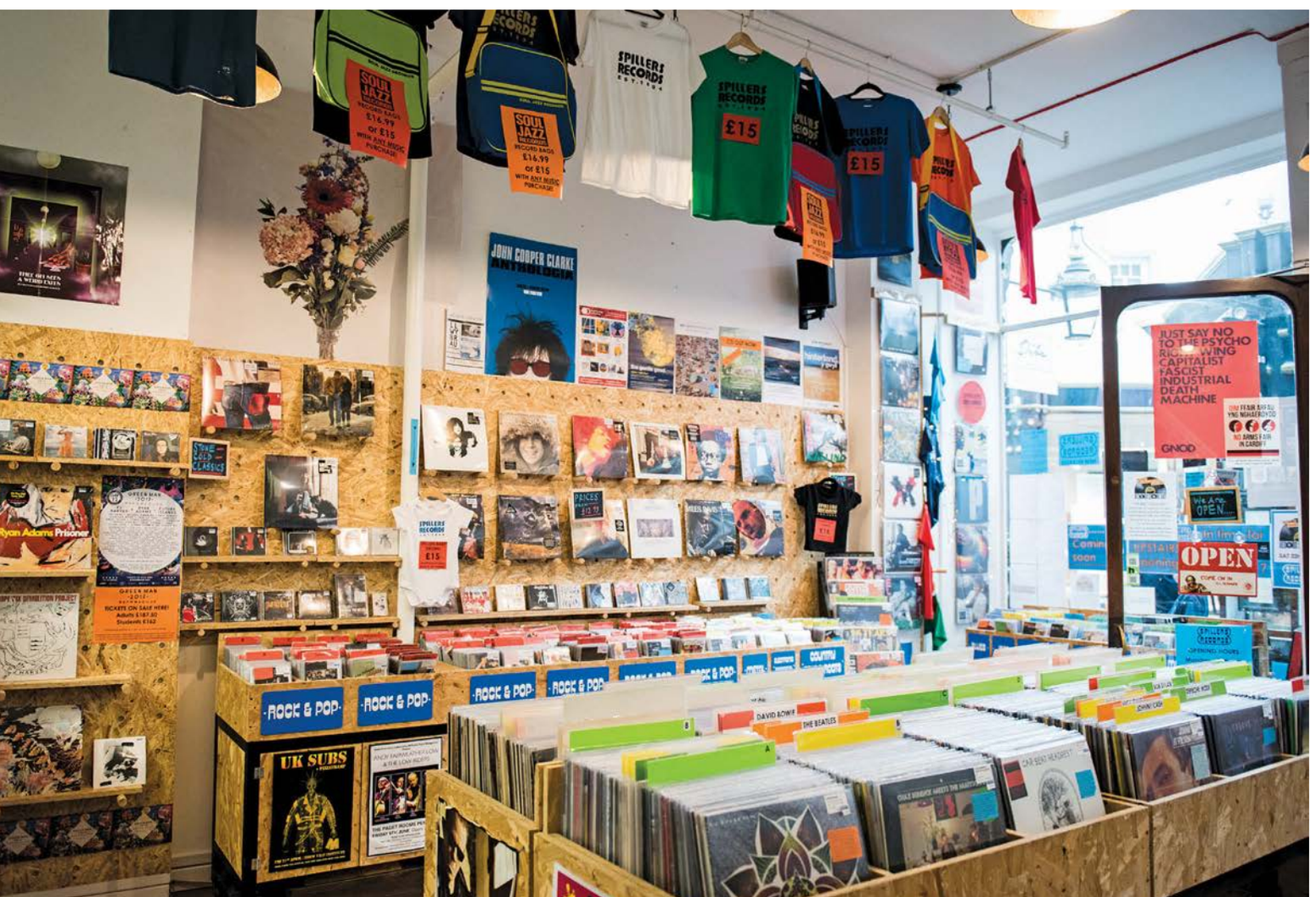
2010 Ashli takes over Spillers from her dad, with help from her sister Grace Todd, and moves the shop to a more affordable temporary home at 31 Morgan Arcade

2011 First Spillers fanzine published for RSD11

2013 Spillers teams up with local manufacturer Rega to launch a limited-edition run of 100 Spillers turntables for RSD13

2015 Spillers moves to a more permanent home nearby – at 27 Morgan Arcade

2017 New upstairs area opens – a curated space for music, events and exhibitions. Ashli celebrates 20 years of working in the shop



about this'. Something happened along these lines and the guy just switched off because I was a girl; and when they went, a lad who worked for me last year just turned to me and went, 'Do you know the amount of times I've witnessed you saying something really interesting and relevant to men of a certain age and they just aren't getting it?'. I really thought it was just me, some sort of chip on my shoulder, but he saw it, too."

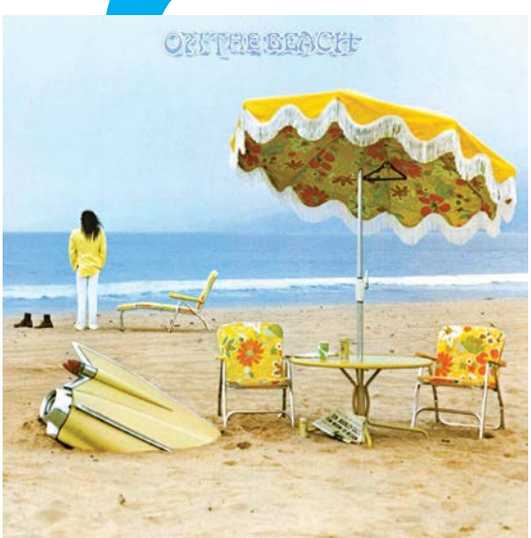
Thankfully, those instances are few and far between and Ashli says it does not extend to the music industry as a whole, confessing: "I find the people I deal with here in the music industry far more open-minded and less condescending than when I walk down the high street."

It's hard to pinpoint a typical Spillers customer or set demographic, says Ashli: "We have everything from the single guy on benefits, where the only thing he has is music, who pops in to hang out, to high-flying business people. We attract lost souls and wandering spirits."

In the past few years, there has been a shift in the make-up of the shop – a few years ago, a third of the stock was vinyl, compared to two-thirds CDs, but now it is more like half and half, with vinyl sales making up almost two thirds of the takings and CDs just a third. Arctic Monkeys prove an ever-popular choice, along with Pink Floyd's *Dark*

TOP OF THE SHOP

Spillers' owner picks her all-time favourite vinyl...



NEIL YOUNG
ON THE BEACH
US LP, Reprise Records (1974)

"My favourite is *On The Beach* by Neil Young; I love that album so much. When I was an art student, it was unavailable – he let it go out of print and didn't reissue it. We had a trip to New York with art college and it was a chance to go to lots of amazing record shops. I managed to pick up a CD bootleg of that album for $25, which was quite a lot of money then, but then I was very lucky to be given an original copy of it by an ex-customer – he's now moved back to the Netherlands. He was basically changing all of his stuff from vinyl to CD – as so many did back then – and gave me a bunch of records, one of which was Neil Young's *On The Beach*."

Side Of The Moon, which Ashli reckons they sell a copy of on a weekly basis.

She says: "It's one that will keep selling for ever and ever and ever. I'm amazed it's not reached saturation point, surely everyone has one already? How can we still sell so many copies? What's happened to them all?" She admits that an increasingly young audience may have a role to play in this phenomenon. "Without a doubt, more young people are buying vinyl than CDs," says Ashli. "It's the format of choice for youngsters and I hope they stick with it and don't treat it as a fad."

A younger audience brings with it new ways of engaging. Spillers now has an ever-growing online community and welcomes customers from far and wide, thanks in part to a good reputation for ordering hard-to-find records. "Customer orders are a huge part of the service we offer," says Ashli. "If we don't have it and can get it for you, we will order it and we won't charge more than we would to have it on the shelf. People know that we can't keep things in stock all the time, because we're not Amazon. It's a matter of principle that they want to support an independent business.

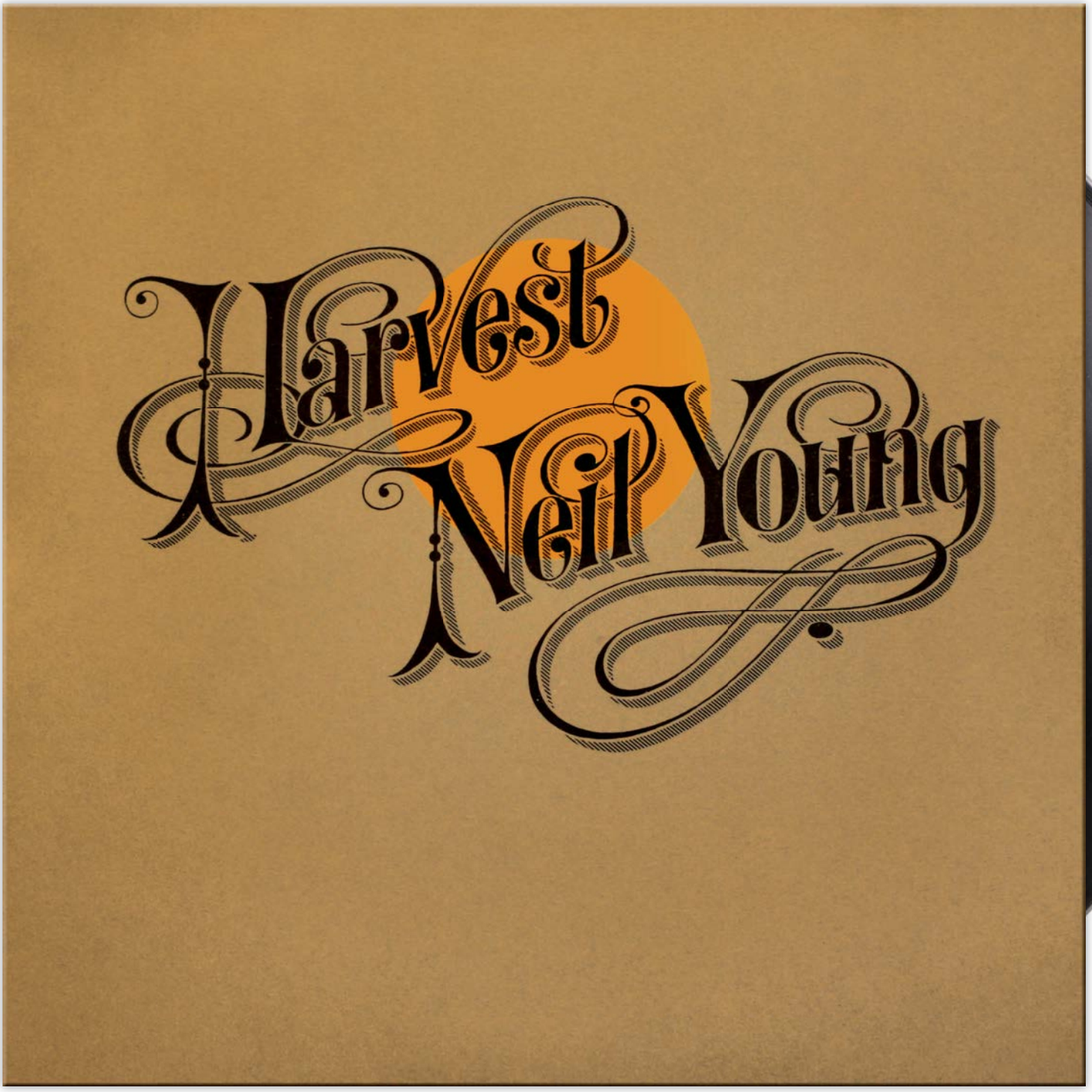
"It's great being able to tap into relationships with people who get your ethos and what the shop is about," Ashli adds. "We end up seeing people from all around the country – Bognor, Southend, Birmingham, places like that.

"As great as the internet has been for us, I personally think that there is way too much noise on the internet – it's such a hyped, bullshit world at the moment, I'm fed up of everything being the 'best ever'. Though in fairness, with Record Store Day, each one has been. But, I mean, how do you measure that? We're definitely more about real life, face-to-face." ●

> WITHOUT A DOUBT, MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BUYING VINYL THAN CDS. IT'S THE FORMAT OF CHOICE FOR YOUNGSTERS AND I HOPE THEY STICK WITH IT AND DON'T TREAT IT AS A FAD
>
> **ASHLI TODD**

Classic Album
NEIL YOUNG
HARVEST

Wary of his growing fame and suffering a debilitating back problem, 1971 saw Neil Young retreat from the limelight to record a simple "homey" LP. Oddness followed, with one-armed drumming in old kitchens and the classic mixing instruction "More barn!" shouted from a boat. Unintentionally, *Harvest* made Neil Young more famous than he'd ever been...


Harvest
Neil Young

JACK NITZSCHE
The multi-talented composer, orchestrator and production specialist also played piano and slide guitar on Harvest

NEIL YOUNG
The bandleader, playing his Gretsch stood upright – although Young had a severe bout of back pain during the album's recording, which resulted in him having surgery

KENNY BUTTREY
Another member of this hastily assembled band who went on to play with the greats, Nashville-born drummer and arranger Buttrey played drums and percussion in the Stray Gators

TIM DRUMMOND
Tim was the main bass player on the album, and he ended up working with Young across the next two decades, both live and in the studio – inbetween working with a roll call of music's biggest names

BEN KEITH
This Nashville sessioneer was drafted in to work on the album's sessions at short notice. This was the pedal-steel player and multi-instrumentalist's first contact with Young, but it led to a near 40-year-long collaboration

Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal/TGOPHOTO.COM

Neil onstage with his Old Black Les Paul guitar, captured by rock 'n' roll photographer Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal

It's the one Neil Young album people who don't really like Neil Young own. And *Harvest* may not even be Neil Young's best album. Indeed, critics say it most certainly isn't, with preceding solo salvos *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* and *After The Gold Rush* trumping it for sophistication and consistency. But *Harvest* was and is more than just 'another Neil Young LP'.

It was Neil Young's first big hit: and despite his 'legend' status, he's really not flirted with the mainstream that often. *Heart Of Gold* actually went to No. 1 in the US: according to *Billboard*'s own figures, *Harvest* was 1972's best-selling album – more copies, even, than The Rolling Stones' *Exile On Main Street*, Simon And Garfunkel's *Greatest Hits*, Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust…* and releases from Elton John, and a then-rampaging Deep Purple.

Even more than that, *Harvest* tapped into the growing sense in the early 70s that music really didn't need to be ever-more grandiose – take that, Yes and your *Fragile* intricacies called *The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus)*! Another noted star of the day was Carole King, whose *Tapestry* and *Music* also proved that good songs simply always win the day. Young wasn't the first to do it, but that well-worn 'broken-hearted singer-songwriter' vibe as valid 'rock' performance? It kinda starts with *Harvest*. That's right: Ed Sheeran is Neil Young's fault (we joke).

Young himself wasn't always comfortable with *Harvest*'s fruits – more of which later – but it was almost a triumph of Young against himself. Lord knows, he can be ▶

It's the one Neil Young album people who don't really like Neil Young own. And Harvest may not even be Neil Young's best album

Young relaxing in Monkee Peter Tork's pool between rehearsals

Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal/TGOPHOTO.COM

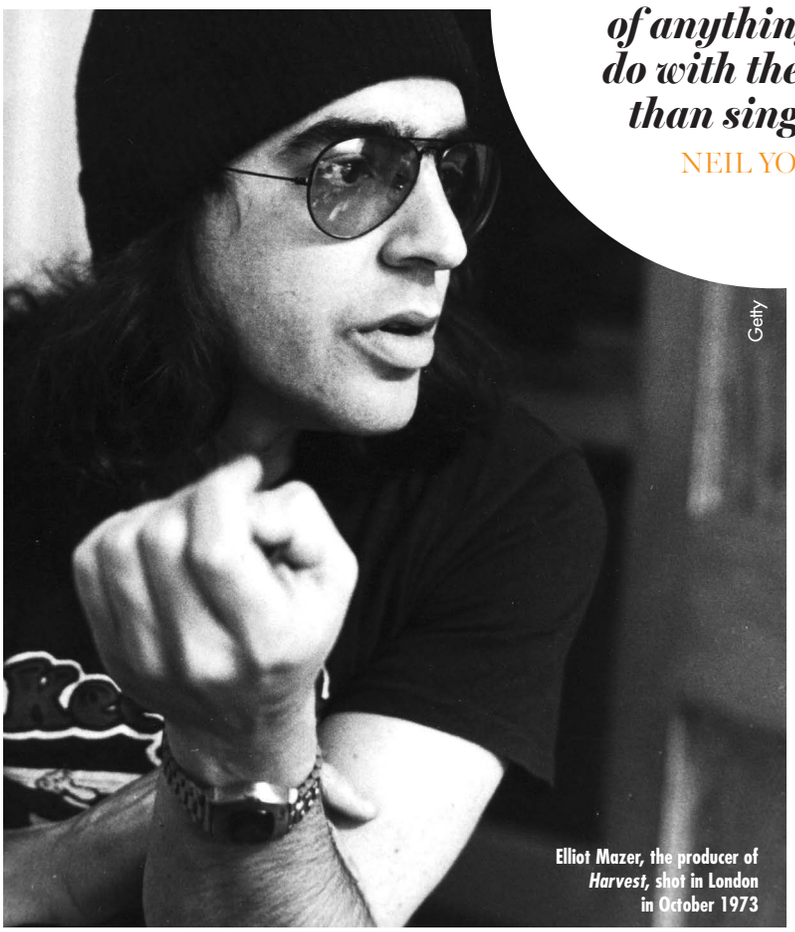
▶

Getty Images

Neil on *The Johnny Cash Show*, 17 February, 1971 – he already had half of *Harvest* in the can, despite only starting it that month

"I've written so many new ones that I can't think of anything else to do with them other than sing them"

NEIL YOUNG



Getty

Elliot Mazer, the producer of *Harvest*, shot in London in October 1973

an acquired taste, but if there's one Neil Young LP that everyone seems to have – and by rights it should be owned on vinyl – it's this. And it's ultimately because *Harvest* yields some of the most accessible music Neil Young has ever made.

Despite his notorious hard-headedness, Young has always been a serial collaborator. And *Harvest* is really no different. Although his name alone adorns the cover, he hooked some celebrated Nashville country session musicians he dubbed the Stray Gators, and also the London Symphony Orchestra. He also tapped future folk/country ascendants Linda Ronstadt and James Taylor, while previous bandmates David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Graham Nash all provided backing vocals.

Sounds confused? It was, maybe. But there were more factors involved in making *Harvest* than Young finding some pals to embellish his reedy whine. There were crucial decisions about where to record and new technological methods to be explored. Yet there was also a simultaneous, if seemingly contradictory, desire to go back to 'old ways'; lofty ideals on 'green' LP packaging… It all adds up to vinyl paradise. Young was even wearing plaid shirts. Slap *Harvest* into a 2017 Hoxton coffee shop, and its artisanal charms would positively scream 'hipster'!

But it's also more genuine than that. Get a copy of *Harvest* in patina'd-paper gatefold sleeve (preferably with that original lyric sheet inlay) and you can hold it up proudly to anyone: "This, people, is a *real* 'record.'"

"I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO DO..."

In a now-legendary performance at Toronto's Massey Hall on 19 January 1971, Young shuffled in front of his hometown audience and remarked of his songs: "I've written so many new ones that I can't think of anything else to do with them other than sing them."

Potent, stripped-down songs called *Heart Of Gold*, *Old Man* and *The Needle And The Damage Done* were duly tested. Young liked them, his audience loved them. As part of his then *Journey Through The Past* tour, a newer image of Young alone – free from Buffalo Springfield and CSNY – hunkered over his Martin acoustic, hammering out those clanking chords, was one soon set in stone.

In fact, Young's relocation to balladville was purely a practical concern: persistent back problems, which later required surgery, had made it painful for him to play his weighty 'Old Black' Les Paul and he simply couldn't perform properly with it, or even standing up. A month after Toronto, while playing with Taylor and Ronstadt for a *Johnny Cash TV Show* session recorded in Nashville, Young was still travelling light, with just his (now iconic) Martin D-45 acoustic.

While in 'Music City', Young accepted a dinner invite from young producer Elliot Mazer, who had just launched Quadrafonic Sound Studios, a converted two-storey house in Nashville's Music Row. Mazer had recognised early the sense of 'romance' that a place like Quad could offer artists: "The control room was the old porch. The living room and dining room became the two live rooms, and the kitchen became a drum area."

The name, though? "We called it Quadrafonic as a joke," Mazer later explained, "although it did have four speakers in the control room. I did one quad mix there."

"Headed For The Ditch..."

In his own liner notes for the triple-vinyl *Decade* compilation album (1977), Young wrote "*Heart Of Gold* put me in the middle of the road. Travelling there soon became a bore so I headed for the ditch. A rougher ride but I saw more interesting people there." In the words of collaborator David Crosby: "He's not trying to do what everybody else is trying to do. Which is to have a hit, and keep pulling that handle. Neil doesn't *care* about that."

The post-*Harvest* deaths of Danny Whitten and then roadie/close friend Bruce Berry cast a dark shadow over Young, and the three albums that followed – *On The Beach*, *Tonight's The Night* and (the out-of-circulation, live) *Time Fades Away* – were ragged, noisy, unhinged affairs. And deeply uncommercial, too. *Tonight's The Night* – "a yowling, howling mess of a record where everyone is blotto" in the words of Jimmy McDonough, author of the Young biography *Shakey* – has became a critics' favourite because it's a harrowing listen.

So Neil Young *naïfs* who like *Harvest* can confidently go back one album to *After The Gold Rush*. But don't expect what comes right after to be a step-up. As McDonough says: "Whatever happens around the guy, you can't count on it continuing."

The songs

All songs written by
Neil Young

All songs produced by
Neil Young and Elliot Mazer

Except *Needle And The Damage Done* (Young and Henry Lewy), *There's A World* and *A Man Needs A Maid* (Young and Jack Nitzsche)

Neil Young *Lead vocals, electric and acoustic guitars, harmonica, piano*
Ben Keith *Pedal-steel guitar*
Jack Nitzsche *Piano, arrangements, orchestration*
Tim Drummond *Bass*
Kenny Buttrey *Drums*
Variations *see individual tracks*

1 *OUT ON THE WEEKEND*

A seemingly heartbroken lament for a lost love, though Young later expanded on his lyrics "Can't relate to joy/He tries to speak and/Can't begin to say" by saying: "That just means that I'm happy so that I can't get it all out. But… the way I wrote it sounds sad." It has an unbelievably simple structure: while Young's chorus chords shift, the bass and pedal-steel remain constantly on an A note. A country-rock 101, it's been covered by everyone from Conor Oberst/Bright Eyes to Elliott Smith to Lady Gaga.

2 *HARVEST*

Additional musicians John Harris *piano*

Debuted on solo piano at his Royal Festival Show in London on 27 Feb 1971: "This is a new song I just wrote last night. I can't, uuh, remember all the words… A lot of words, folks." Despite Young reading his lyric sheet (the final, recorded version's vary slightly), *Harvest* immediately hit home with the crowd – even more so because he mentioned it was to be his next album's title.

3 *A MAN NEEDS A MAID*

Additional musicians
The London Symphony Orchestra

The first controversial orchestral track, and originally part of a 'suite' with *Heart Of Gold*. Young took flak for his language, being accused by some of being sexist (although when he debuted it at Massey Hall in Toronto, he actually sang the song as originally written: "Afraid, a man feels afraid…"). In that light, some interpret it as conveying the lies men tell themselves because they're so bad at being emotionally open partners – ergo, it's *pro*-women. In his book, *Journey Through The Past: The Stories Behind The Classic Songs Of Neil Young*, music writer Nigel Williamson reckons it could just be literal fact: Young's back injury at the time meant he needed a professional maid. And anyway, rumours suggest it was inspired by first seeing his new love, Carrie Snodgress, in the movie *Diary Of A Mad Housewife*. Young has artfully deflected any over-literal interpretations by saying, "Robin Hood loved a maid long before women's liberation."

The songs *continued*

4 *HEART OF GOLD*

Additional musicians Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor *backing vocals*, Teddy Irwin *second acoustic guitar*

An atypically straight love song for Young. *Rolling Stone* said it bore "superstardom's weariest clichés", but the public didn't care: It became Young's only No. 1 single. It was the first track recorded in Nashville on 6 February 1971 with the Stray Gators and was essentially finished in its second take – Ronstadt and Taylor added backing vocals the next night. Ronstadt recalled to *Mojo*: "We were sat on the couch in the control room, but I had to get up on my knees to be on the same level as James because he's so tall. Then we sang all night, the highest notes I could sing. It was so hard, but nobody minded. It was dawn when we walked out of the studio."

Lady Gaga is clearly a fan of *Harvest*. In her country-ish *Yoü And I* hit from 2011, she sings: "On my birthday you sang me *Heart Of Gold*/With a guitar humming and no clothes." Plus, Gaga's video is set in a barn. See?

5 *ARE YOU READY FOR THE COUNTRY?*

Additional musicians Jack Nitzsche *lap-steel guitar*, David Crosby, Graham Nash *backing vocals*

***Rolling Stone* called it "an in-joke throwaway intended for the amusement of certain of Neil's superstar pals", even though the lyrics – "I was talkin' to the preacher, said, 'God was on my side'/Then I ran into the hangman, he said, 'It's time to die'" – suggest darker political undercurrents. It did end up a country hit though, covered by Waylon Jennings in 1976. Young plays piano on this and Nitzsche adds rather woozy lap steel, with the basic track recorded at Broken Arrow.**

6 *OLD MAN*

Additional musicians Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor *backing vocals & six-string banjo*, James McMahon *piano*

Young told his BBC audience in February 1971 that this was inspired by "the caretaker, the foreman" living on the California ranch when Young bought it in September 1970. Young's Broken Arrow ranch was next door to a previous hippy commune known as Star Hill Academy For Anything and was set deep in a secluded redwood forest. When Young took it over, only foreman Louis Avila was left, "taking care of all the cows".

7 *THERE'S A WORLD*

***A Man Needs A Maid* survives its strings, but this is undoubtedly *Harvest*'s weakest track: *Rolling Stone* likened it to "a chocolate-covered cheeseburger… This is the one everyone skips when they play *Harvest*, even if they don't all admit it." They're right.**

8 *ALABAMA*

Additional musicians David Crosby, Stephen Stills *backing vocals*

A companion (or, if you're unkind, a rehash) of *Southern Man* from preceding album *After The Gold Rush* and part of the torturous back-and-forth spat/not-spat between Young and Lynyrd Skynyrd (*Sweet Home Alabama*). It has great gritty Gretsch guitar from Young and is a sonic forbear of the 'ditch' to where he was headed. More nuanced than many give its lyrics credit for, perhaps, but attacking a whole State is pretty brazen. Bad Neil!

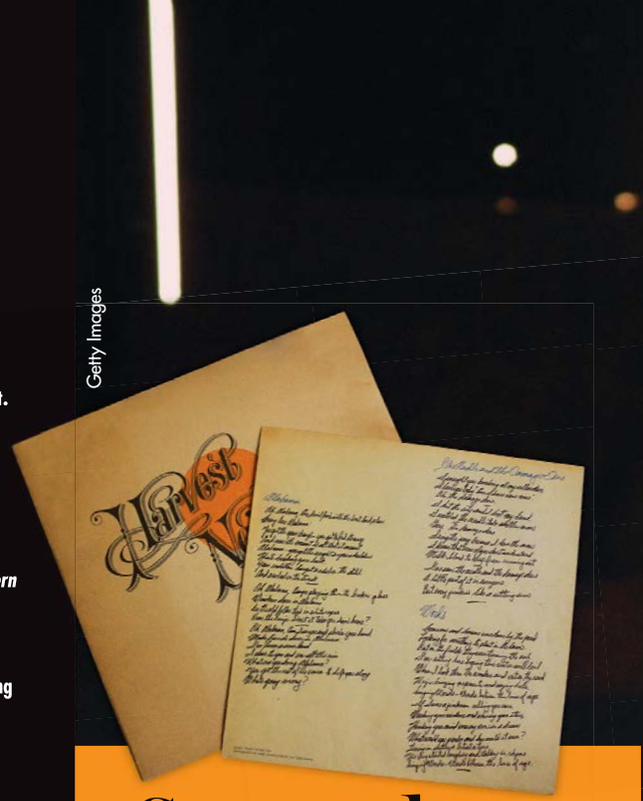
9 *THE NEEDLE AND THE DAMAGE DONE*

A purely solo track, recorded live at UCLA on 30 January, 1971, before the Quad sessions had started. "Neil chose that one," Mazer remembered. "Neil has a phenomenal memory and he can recall a particular take from years before." The song is perhaps not *wholly* about Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten, but is largely inspired by him after Young had dismissed Crazy Horse from the *After The Gold Rush* recording because of Whitten's heroin addiction. It's uncomfortably prescient. Young did ask Whitten back to rehearse in San Francisco in November 1972 for the upcoming *Harvest* support tour, but Danny was still in bad shape and playing terribly. At his wits' end, Young gave Whitten $50 for rehab and a plane ticket back to LA: later that same night, Whitten died from a fatal combination of Valium and alcohol, which he was using to try to get over the heroin. For years, Young said he felt responsible for Whitten's death: "That blew my mind. Fucking blew my mind. I loved Danny."

10 *WORDS / (BETWEEN THE LINES OF AGE)*

Additional musicians Graham Nash, Stephen Stills *backing vocals*

In *Waging Heavy Peace*, Young writes: "*Words* is the first song that reveals a little of my early doubts of being in a long-term relationship with Carrie… The peace was going away. It was changing too fast… That was how we did *Harvest*, in love at the beginning and with some doubts at the end." With timeshifts between 11/8 and straight 4/4, its ragged groove unravels gradually, ending the album with spluttering, snarling Young guitar… a world away from the hushed intimacy of *Out On The Weekend*.



Getty Images

Surround Yourself? *Harvest*'s DVD-A 5.1 Mix

***Harvest* is undoubtedly best heard on vinyl, but in 2002, Neil Young did make some concession to digital audio (which he generally loathes) by instigating a 5:1 Surround Sound version for DVD-Audio. Elliot Mazer – again co-opted to produce the project – hadn't even heard of the format at the time. He told *Mix*: "Neil called up and said, 'We want to do a new mix of *Harvest*'. I said, 'Are you out of your mind? You're going to take a record that everybody knows and you're going to do a new version of it?!'"**

Young himself made a copy of the analogue 16-track masters and oversaw a mix that reflected, as best as he could remember, what *Harvest* sounded like to make. "What it came down to was immersion," explained Mazer. "Putting the listener in the room, in the studio with the band." As such, Young's voice is centre-front, the drums at the 'rear', but it remains hugely controversial. Some buyers maintain there's a manufacturing error, with them suggesting a channel switch-around or even a DIY-fix using Audacity software… even if it was how Young 'remembered' and favoured it, most listeners seemed to prefer the hi-res stereo version.

Stick to vinyl. The Limited Edition *Harvest* 180g vinyl reissue/remaster (2009, Reprise 9362-49786-5) with exact repro artwork is circa £25. Original copies (1972, Reprise K54005) are still found second-hand for all manner of prices, though a mint example with the fold-out lyric sheet can sell for circa £70.

> ***"Neil said to Kenny that his hi-hat was too busy, so Kenny said, 'Fine. I'll sit on my right hand'"***
> ELLIOT MAZER

Young had been amassing studio gear at his California ranch, but it wasn't really set up. He took up Mazer's offer to come by Quad and record. Nashville may still have been – and in fact, still is – associated with 10-gallon hats and spurs, but Music Row (an area, not a street) was no rural backwater. Indeed, Nashville wasn't full of cowboys, it was full of professionals. These days, Quad, now named Round Hill Music, is neighbour to the lawyers, accountancy firms and parking lots that keep Music City moving. But it was in these non-agrarian environs that this country-fied *Harvest* bore first fruit.

Young started at Quad on 6 February 1971. It was a Saturday night, and Mazer had to quickly assemble a band. Some of them, Young didn't even know.

Elliot Mazer later told *tapeop.com*: "Neil was very specific about what he wanted. When Neil Young plays a song, his body language dictates everything about the arrangement. Neil sat in the control room of Quadrafonic and played *Heart Of Gold*. Kenny [Buttrey, drums] and I looked at each other, and we both knew it was a No. 1 record. We heard the song and all we had to do was move Neil into the studio and get the band out there, start the machine and make it sound good. It was incredible!

"At one point on another song, Neil said to Kenny that his hi-hat was too busy, so Kenny said, 'Fine. I'll sit on my right hand'. He played the whole take sitting on his right hand." By 8 February, only three days in, Young had already cut the versions of *Old Man* and *Heart Of Gold* to be released. "Neil and the band played live," said Mazer, "same as every song on *Harvest*.

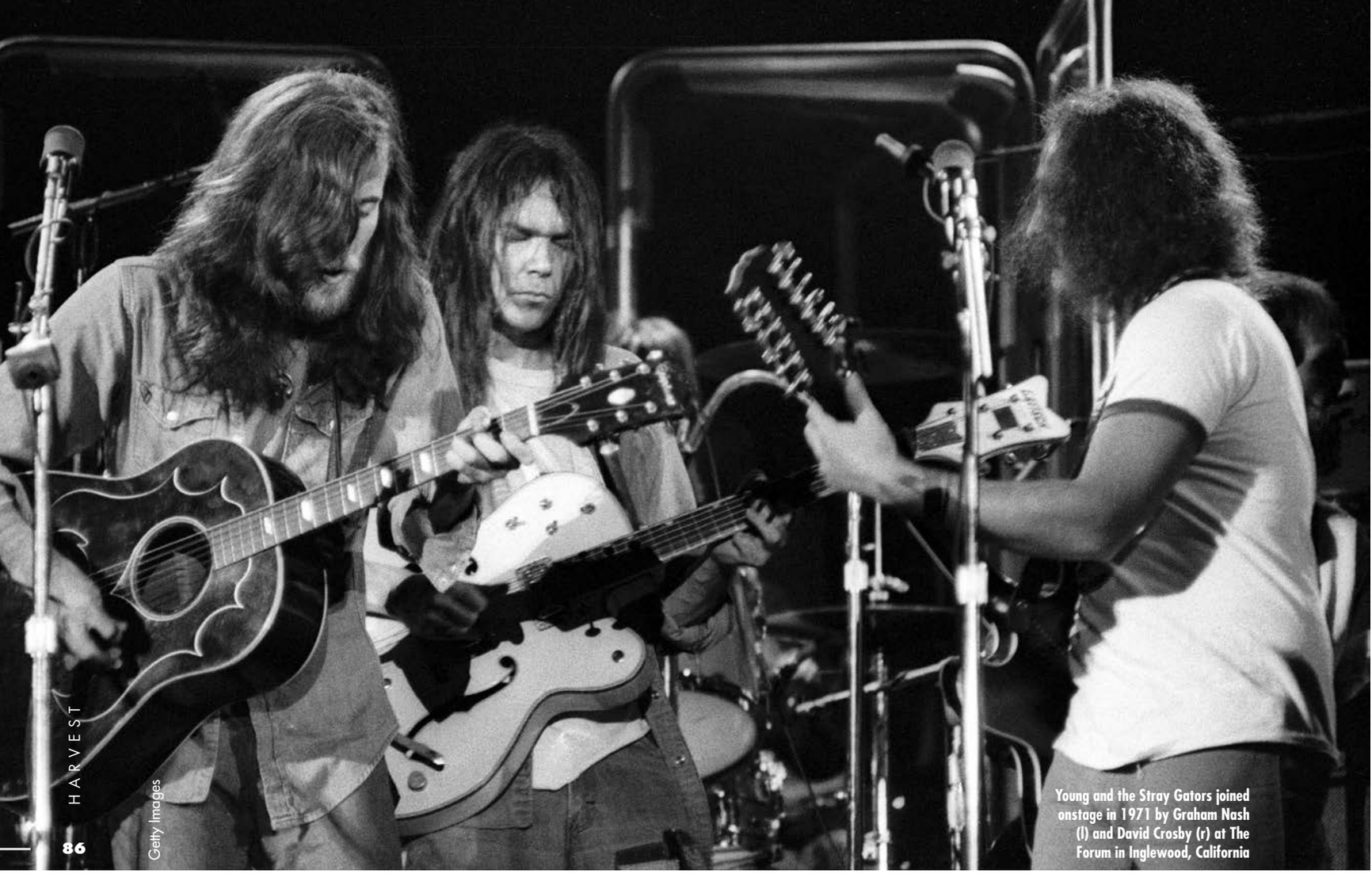
HANDCRAFTED IN NASHVILLE, CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK... AND BARKING?

But Young was soon on the move, to London, for BBC TV's *In Concert* (another legendary show) and a live date at the Royal Festival Hall. On the same visit, *A Man Needs A Maid* was one of two songs recorded with Young on piano and with backing from the London Symphony Orchestra, the glamorous recording location being… Barking Town Hall (residents, call Barking & Dagenham Direct on 020 8215 3000 for all your pest-control concerns!).

Along with the portentous *There's A World*, its strings were arranged by Stray Gators keyboardist Jack Nitzsche. Like Phil Spector's strings on The Beatles' *Let It Be*, the arrangements of Nitzsche – notably also Spector's production sidekick – have often been criticised as overbearing and ill-matching.

But *Rolling Stone* said the strings on *A Man Needs A Maid* made for "a moving union of grandeur and vulnerability". Young has never cared for critics and, anyway, he was happy: "Bob Dylan told me it was one of his favourites," Neil noted. "I listened closer to Bob."

Leaving the grandeur of Barking behind, Young returned to the US. Back in Nashville's Quad, he and the Stray Gators quickly recorded LP opener *Out On The Weekend* and the title track itself. The former remains a remarkable-sounding cut: the almost somnambulant plod of Kenny Buttrey's drums, Young's hovering, sobbing harmonica, the tolling-bell notes of Ben Keith's pedal steel… all echo like the ghosts of Young's love life in the



Getty Images

Young and the Stray Gators joined onstage in 1971 by Graham Nash (l) and David Crosby (r) at The Forum in Inglewood, California

lyrics. *Out On The Weekend* encapsulated just why its recently divorced author was finding the life of a travelling star so damned shitty, even though he had started a new relationship with actress Carrie Snodgress.

In just a few actual recording days – five, maybe six – *Harvest* was six-tracks done: a testament to just how strong these simple songs were. Young took a break for most of April to September 1971, when he reconvened the Stray Gators at the California ranch he'd called Broken Arrow. The session yielded a more electrified crop, and in the expansive wooden barn they nailed down *Alabama*, *Are You Ready For The Country?* and *Words / (Between The Lines Of Age)*.

There was one more recording needed. And for another Young classic, *The Needle And The Damage Done*, he didn't even bother with barn or studio: the album track is taken from an early live recording from 30 January 1971. The day after Toronto: the day after Neil Young said: "I can't think of anything else to do…" September had come, and the *Harvest* was all but over.

JUST WHAT EVERY LP NEEDS... "MORE BARN!"

When it came to mixing, time was again split between Quad in Nashville and Broken Arrow in Cali – for some unfathomable reason, Barking held no allure. Young had succumbed and went to hospital for back surgery, while Mazer duplicated Quad's mixing equipment in the living room at Broken Arrow. He mixed the Barking orchestral sessions and most of the Barn's electric tracks and flew to New York to overdub Crosby and Nash's backing vocal parts. The final mix was soon completed at Broken Arrow – apart from some outside opinion, that is.

So it was that Graham Nash visited Broken Arrow, expecting to hear the album from the comfort of Young's makeshift home studio. Not so, as Nash revealed later on. "That's not what Neil had in mind. He said, 'Get into the rowboat,'" recounted Nash to *NPR*. "I said, 'Get into the rowboat?'. He said, 'Yeah, we're going to go out into the middle of the lake'. Now, I think he's got a little cassette player with him or a little, you know, early digital-format player. So I'm thinking, I'm going to wear headphones and listen in the relative peace in the middle of Neil's lake.

"Oh, no. He has his entire house as the left speaker and his entire barn as the right speaker. And I heard *Harvest* coming out of these two incredibly large loudspeakers, louder than hell. It was unbelievable. Elliot Mazer, who produced Neil, produced *Harvest,* came down to the shore of the lake and he shouted out to Neil: 'How was that, Neil?' And I swear to God, Neil Young shouted back: 'More barn!'"

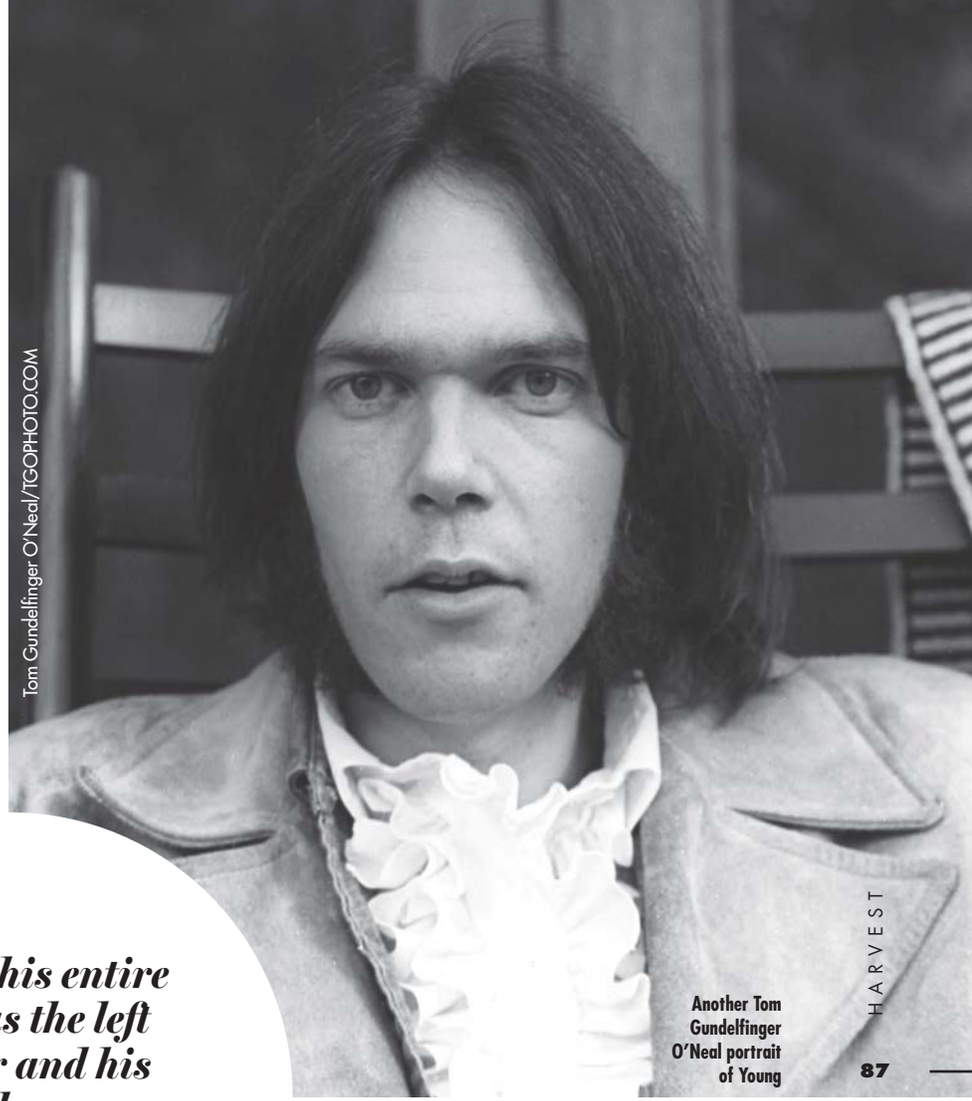
The tale enraptured fans of Young's idiosyncracy – so much so that superfan Brad Brandeau, of fan site hyperrust.org, started a cult line in 'More Barn!' T-shirts in the 90s (with a cartoon Young and Nash in a rowboat

(pictured), that eventually earned the Neil seal of approval. Young still gets asked about the tale to this day and in 2016, confirmed to *The Huffington Post* that his punchline was true. "Yeah," Young recalled of his "More barn!" instructions for *Harvest*: "I think it was a little house heavy."

Young's own ambivalence about *Harvest* is well known. For every disparaging comment of his (see the "Headed For The Ditch…" boxout on page 83), there's evidence to the contrary – he still plays the songs live; *Harvest Moon* (again with the Stray Gators, 1992) is a sequel of sorts, and Young once told the *NME Harvest* was "probably the best record I've made".

But yes, Neil Young changes his mind from time to time – so what? He was likely mirroring himself when he said about über-fans who adore *everything* he does: "Well, they must be fuckin' completely crazy. They must have some kind of personality disorder."

And those with only a passing interest in Young know that *Harvest* is one of his best. Young once told a BBC documentary team that he views his albums as "pictures in a gallery" and his true concern is about "how they're seen in 30 or 40 years' time". And, by that measure – from its simple but broad songstrokes to a superbly detailed production – *Harvest* remains a masterpiece. ●



Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal/TGOPHOTO.COM

Another Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal portrait of Young

"He has his entire house as the left speaker and his entire barn as the right speaker… It was unbelievable"

GRAHAM NASH

Neil Young performs in London for BBC TV show *In Concert* in 1971

Getty Images

KASABIAN AND PROUD

Getty Images

Rudy Bolly catches up with Kasabian's bandleader and chief songwriter, Serge Pizzorno, in a London bar to discuss new album *For Crying Out Loud*, his vinyl fetish and becoming the Elton John of Leicester City FC…

File Kasabian under 'indie rock' at your peril. The Leicester quartet first hit the charts with a laddish sneer in 2004, and were quickly dubbed 'saviours of rock'. Such lazy labels do their diverse output a disservice. Sure, they can pound your ears into submission with glammy riffs, but dig a little deeper and it's clear Kasabian have always been a more sophisticated proposition, dabbling with electronica, hip-hop and an Olympic-swimming-pool-sized dose of psychedelia. Now back with instantly lovable new album *For Crying Out Loud*, it's packed full of sharp, smart jukebox anthems.

As album titles go, *For Crying Out Loud* is unusual, jarring even; which was precisely the idea. "It's a phrase I've heard a lot during my life," sniggers the charmingly dishevelled Serge. "My old man hitting his hand with a hammer, or my grandma giving me a clip around the ear. It's just ingrained in me."

More than an exclamation, *For Crying Out Loud* is also a statement of intent. ▶

"It has a double meaning," Serge agrees. "When it's written down, it takes on a different life. I thought to myself, 'I've made an album of anthems with big melodies here.' I liked the idea of it being music for crying out, loud, to. You know, music for screaming your lungs out to."

Established rock bands, six albums into their career, normally have a habit of gallivanting off to a studio in the Bahamas for six months or more. Interestingly, Serge did the opposite and proposed to write and record the entire record in just six weeks at his home studio, rather brilliantly christened The Sergery.

"The plan was to produce a very short, concise explanation of my music. It harks back to the hit factories of the 60s; I was listening to Berry Gordy and a lot of Motown. Our records used to be ready 'when they're ready', but what excited me was the idea of giving myself a deadline. No more messing – these are the songs written in this time, they're great, so let's just put them out."

It almost went to plan. Serge delivered 10 complete tracks in that six-week period: "Then I wrote a couple more, which made it more cohesive," he says. Such conviction in the face of (self-imposed) adversity is refreshing, but it mirrored what many R&B musicians endured right up until the 90s. While privileged rock bands were blocking out months at state-of-the-art studios, acts such as Chic and Earth, Wind & Fire often had only hours to record entire albums, and usually at ungodly times. Nevertheless, it's a method that's regularly delivered a classic.

Serge agrees. "I don't think your brain works any better the longer you have. You've got the chops, get it out. If I had until next May or, say, five o'clock tonight to write a song, chances are the results are going to be better tonight. Deadlines are important to kick yourself into a different gear."

For Crying Out Loud adopts a pure rock-pop approach, a direct response to the electronic twiddling on 2014's *48:13*.

LET'S LISTEN LIKE WE USED TO

"The craft of the song was key," says Serge. "The last one was experimentation and before maybe I wanted to freak people out. But I thought, 'I'm not going to do psychedelia this time, I just want to do really good tunes that last three-and-a-half minutes with an intro you understand, beautifully crafted melodic tunes'. I was sort of really excited by the idea of kids listening in their bedrooms and thinking, 'I can play this on my guitar'."

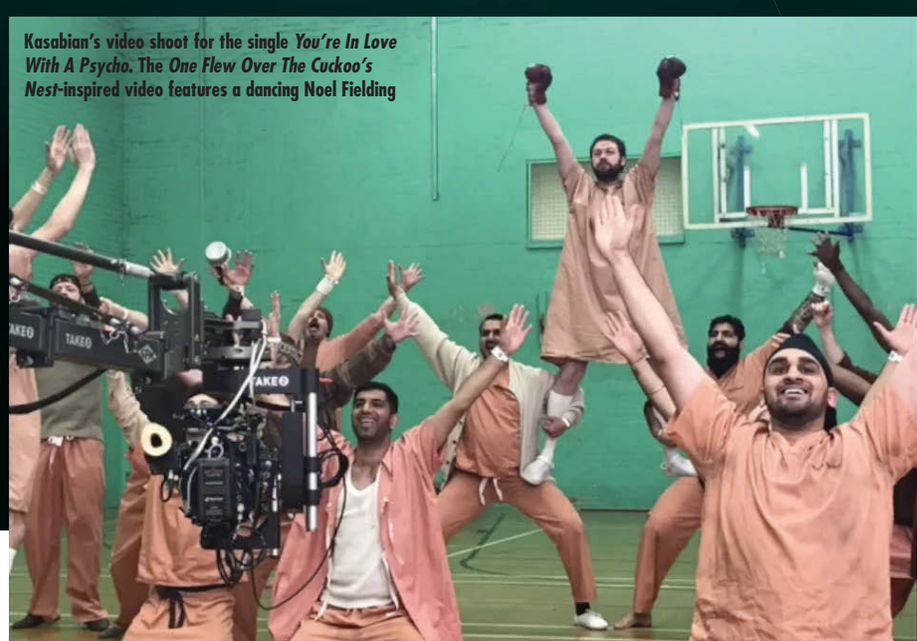
Ultimately, Kasabian wanted to make a truly great album. "This one is about that beautiful tune that only comes around every 20 years or so," he enthuses, then starts cradling an imaginary baby in his arms. "This album is about drawing you in and saying, 'It's okay, we got ya.'"

Fans are definitely in safe hands. Like all great bands, Kasabian are brilliant at referencing the past, while unearthing something fresh. It's a trait that stems from Serge's interest in vinyl. Unfortunately, Kasabian emerged at a low point for the format, an era when many labels didn't even bother pressing new releases onto vinyl. But Serge made sure his band were an exception to the rule. "Every record we've made, even on the first one when nobody was really making vinyl, we pushed for it," he says, listing off a number of Kasabian limited editions. "Back in the day, when we lived on the farm, that's what we did, we would go dig for records. The lifeblood of our youth was finding old classic and obscure records in weird record stores. So it was always a must that our music came out on vinyl and of course, now, it's doing really well. People are into it again, kids are really finding albums again."

Kasabian have a particular fondness for the 10" format, and the new album arrived as a super-limited triple 10" white-vinyl set.

> "I THOUGHT, I'M NOT GOING TO DO PSYCHEDELIA THIS TIME, I JUST WANT REALLY GOOD TUNES"

Alex Lake


Kasabian's video shoot for the single *You're In Love With A Psycho*. The *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*-inspired video features a dancing Noel Fielding

Vocalist Tom Meighan (l) and Serge Pizzorno in the studio

Their persistence and passion encouraged other bands to follow suit. "It's interesting because you can get reissues of albums that were never released on vinyl now. I know bands who don't even own a record player but insist on vinyl."

The guitarist's own personal collection of LPs has got out of control. Even successful rock stars with huge country piles struggle to find adequate space. He explains: "I was mad on it, but I stopped because I had nowhere else to put it. I still have some incredible records that are probably worth a few quid. I'm not a businessman or have the first clue, but I've gathered a lot of records that have inadvertently become very expensive now just because I'm into music. *Endtroducing.....* by DJ Shadow is probably one of my favourite-ever LPs. The fact that he's big into records is pretty amazing and just the cover art made me want to start collecting."

The album turned forgotten vinyl into new classics, and its record-store artwork romanticised the collectors who found them. The LP is one of the reasons why Kasabian are so creative with their own artwork. Aitor Throup, who has worked with the band since *Velociraptor*, created the sleeve to *For Crying Out Loud* with help from visual artist Daft Apeth and photographer Neil Bedford.

The cover features black-and-white portraits of a bawling Rick Graham, the band's longest-serving roadie. "Rick has been with us for 12 years, he's 70 and we wanted to immortalise him," smiles Serge. "He's sort of been around forever – he roadied for The Kinks back in the day."

It's a rare and wonderful homage to a friend, and it's turned Rick into a bit of a celebrity. "Oh yeah, he's lapping it up," says Serge.

Throup's work was inspired by punk fanzines, drawing on references from his own record collection by using a range of fonts. Serge explains: "I think it's really intriguing, like nothing else I've seen on a record in recent times. It's got the classic structure of a 60s album, but with a psychedelic visual twist – it's an interesting move to make."

Judging by his enthusiasm for the past, maybe Serge was born in the wrong decade. Listening to *For Crying Out Loud* is a bit like rifling through your dad's old collection of LPs – Roxy Music, T. Rex and even the big singalong choruses of Bay City Rollers are paid their dues.

"The 70s is bang on," says Serge. "It was a time when pop music was a craft, with backing vocals but this harder guitar. Fleetwood Mac, Bowie, Supertramp – all bands that would kill you with a melody.

"I haven't heard those types of anthemic choruses with a guitar for ages. So now is the time, and if not us, then maybe the next band will bring it back, but it feels like an ancient art, the guitar."

One track in particular, *Good Fight*, possesses the glamour and punchiness of a 1970s rock classic, and its lyrics are a call to arms. "It's us saying, 'come with me, fight the good fight'. It's about sharing something that you are all into – whether it's bands, music, football or art; it's that thing you share with your best mate or missus. We feel the same about our work, fighting the good fight."

The communal vibe continues with *Bless This Acid House*. "That's about hope and picking yourself up off the floor – bless this time we have together. The togetherness that acid house created with all your pals in the same room or in a field, and everybody is revelling in that moment. I flipped it on its head and did it through a punk medium rather than electronically, but it's my take on that feeling."

Kasabian have never been shy of having a good time. However, now the band members are approaching the end of their thirties, a song such as *Party Never Ends* seems to hold more poignancy. Still elegantly wasted, Serge agrees: "I think you just learn over the years to choose your battles wisely. I did enjoy going out, always have done and always will do. There's no need to stop doing that."

There is a serious side to the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, though, and lead singer Tom Meighan recently revealed how he had suffered a breakdown last year. Serge believes Tom's troubles have made Kasabian stronger than ever. "I never thought it would be the end of the band," he says causally. "People go through shit and that's when you have their back. We are a family and we had a man down, so we picked him up, just like he would have done for us."

What has changed definitively is the way people consume music. Incredibly, vinyl has outpaced downloads and CDs, but there is also a whole generation of kids who only know how to subscribe to streaming sites. It means Kasabian had to rethink how they release music, yet again.

"Changes," Serge sighs. "It's the conversation we have had every year since

"I FIGURE IF YOU MAKE GOOD ART THEN PEOPLE WILL BE INTERESTED IN IT, NO MATTER HOW IT GETS RELEASED"

we released our first album. It used to be set in stone, the structure of how you release and tour, and with every year, it's changed. I figured out long ago that it's not for me.

"I have no idea how you have a hit. I figure if you make good art then people will be interested in it, no matter how it gets released. If you don't, they won't."

It's a healthy attitude to have, but the reality is that even a band like Kasabian struggle to make an impact on the singles chart in 2017.

Serge is more philosophical about the situation, however. "Whether you do EPs, singles, or different ways of engaging, ultimately, it's music. I've got a guitar, I've got a synth and drum machine and I try and make things that I like and I hope people like.

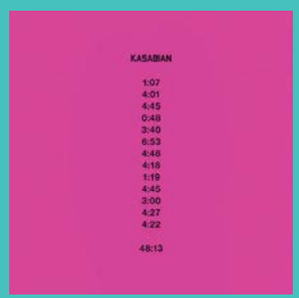
"That's as much as I've got. I have no strategy. All I do is think, 'why

KASABIAN – THROUGH THE YEARS

***Kasabian*, 2004**
Kasabian's debut was an attention-grabbing thrill ride that may have worn its early-to-mid-90s influences on it sleeve, but also turbocharged them in the process, splicing malevolent, grimy riffs to stadium-filling choruses.

***West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum*, 2009**
This more experimental offering took a left turn into a shadowier, more electronica-orientated world, without entirely jettisoning the anthemic elements the fanbase had grown accustomed to.

***48:13*, 2014**
A decade on from their debut, Pizzorno occupied the producer's chair on his own, and proceeded to recapture Kasabian's fire and dancefloor-filling directness, with a few moments of subtlety thrown in for good measure.



Phil Knott

are people still listening to *Stand By Me* by Ben E. King?' Because it's amazing – it doesn't matter if I listen to it as a download or streaming, as long as I can come up with something like that it will work itself out."

Beyond music, Kasabian have also become football mascots. Watford have Elton John, Newcastle United have Ant & Dec and now Leicester City can count Serge and the boys as their celebrity flag wavers. Last year was an emotional season; their beloved Foxes won the Premier League against all odds, so they celebrated with two massive shows at the city's King Power stadium. "It's become part of the Kasabian story," admits Serge, whose song *Fire* is played every matchday as the team walk out. "It's an honour to think that was even possible, as an 11-year-old watching that team. But it's more to me than that, it's my mates. It's beyond football, because football is fucking fucked… it's a congregation for my mates to meet."

FIELD OF DREAMS

"I think like any fan, I'm connected in a way that the club comes first," Serge adds. "The most important people at a club aren't the players or manager, it's the fans."

That theory was tested to the limit when their good friend Claudio Ranieri was sacked earlier this year. Having grown close to the Italian manager, Serge chooses his words carefully: "I feel like I'm allowed to have an opinion, as somebody who has been with them a lot. It was really sad when Ranieri left, but it's amazing how quickly football changes. Three nights later and it was one of the best games I've ever experienced at Leicester – even bigger than winning the league, the atmosphere."

Basically, Kasabian are fanatics, so much so they have made contingency plans for when games clash with gigs. "We have looked at the schedule," he deadpans. "We'll beam it into our dressing rooms and we'll have to come onstage late."

Football aside, touring remains where the band feel most at home. "It's only when you see another show that you realise how much you miss it," he says, getting a little misty eyed. "The 30-second walk from the dressing room to the stage is one of the most amazing experiences you can have."

It would've been understandable if headlining Glastonbury Festival in 2014 had been the pinnacle of their career, but Kasabian are determined it's just the start. "I feel like everything now is just a pure bonus. I didn't feel like it was the end after Glasto. Usually, when you get to where you've been striving to get to it's like, 'I'm bored now,' but with me, I'm excited: 'Where do we go next?'. Anything is possible. I don't want this to end. There's not enough time, but I'm here, you get one spin, things have gone okay, so let's do more shit and make things happen."

Headline sets at Reading and Leeds Festivals, along with Scotland's TRNSMT this summer should keep them sweet. And, mercifully, they won't be demanding a box of kittens on their rider, either. "I'm a simple man," insists Serge, as our interview concludes. "Just give me my passport and point me in the right direction." ●

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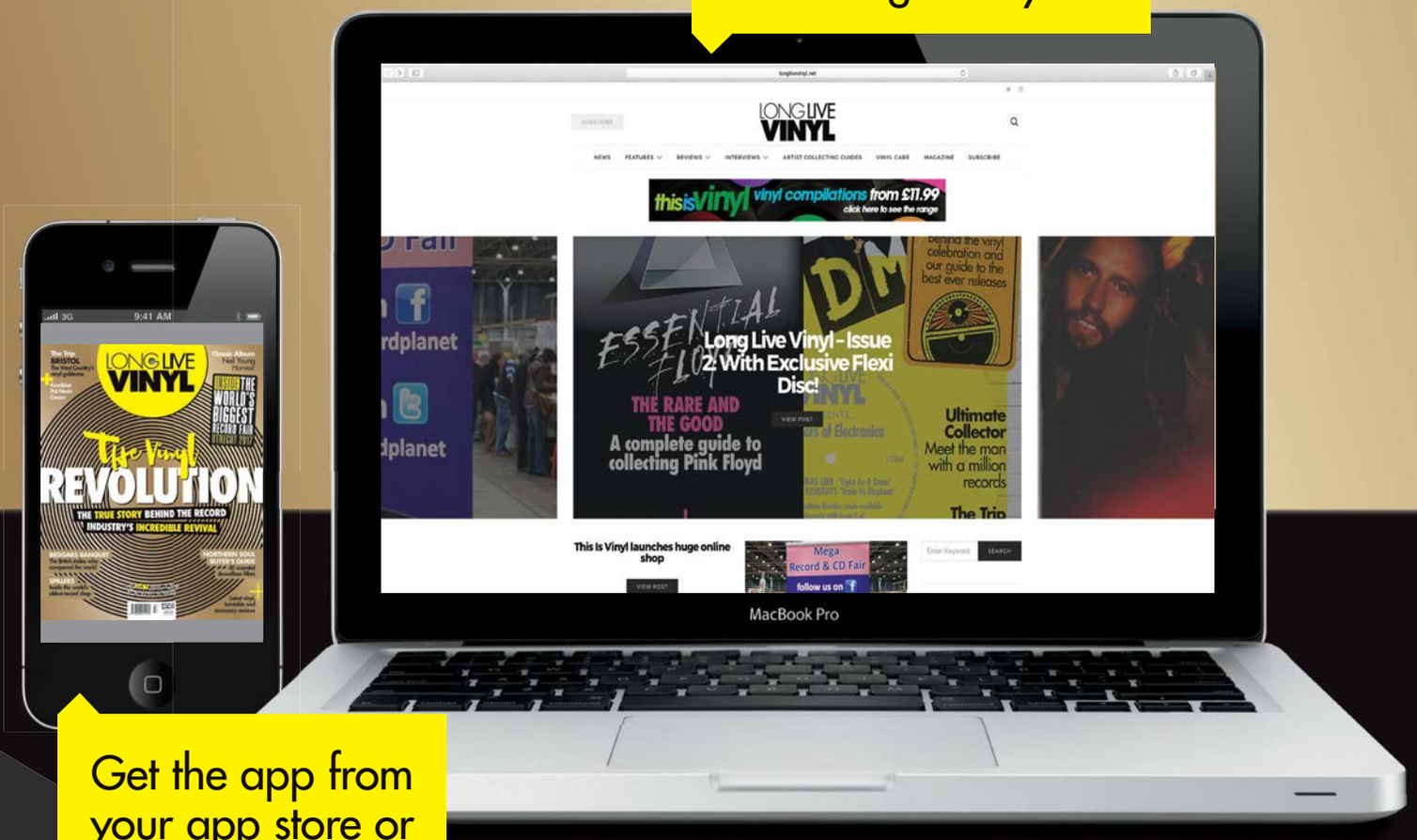

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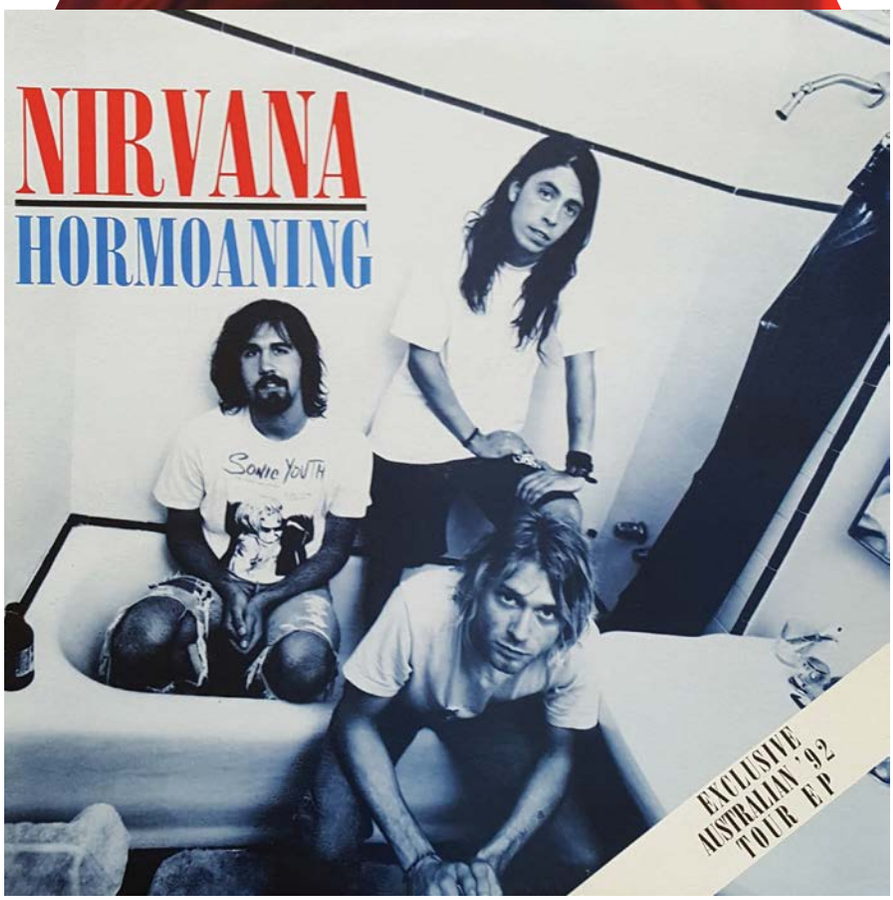
Choice Cuts #1



NIRVANA *HORMOANING*

AUSTRALIAN-ONLY TOUR EP

This Australian-only tour EP has become one of the most desirable releases in Nirvana's back catalogue. Snapping one up won't leave you with much change from £500…

WAX FACTS
Nirvana
Hormoaning
Australian-only tour EP
Year 1992
Format Red and blue swirl vinyl
£495

After Nirvana released their genre-defining second album, *Nevermind*, they were propelled to the status of global superstars. At the start of 1992, several months after its release, the band embarked on their first and only Australian tour. To coincide with the tour, Geffen released a tour-exclusive EP, *Hormoaning,* which has become one of the most sought after Nirvana rarities among collectors wishing to own a piece of grunge history.

While there were CD and cassette copies manufactured – as well as some pressings for the Japanese market – it is the 12" Australian pressing that remains the most desirable. Pressed on stunning red and blue swirl vinyl, and limited to just 4,000 units, it truly is a remarkable item.

The tracks on *Hormoaning* are B-sides and cover songs that appear on Nirvana releases from other territories. Three tracks, *Turnaround* by Devo, and *Son Of A Gun* and *Molly's Lips* by one of Cobain's favourite bands, The Vaselines, would later appear on the *Incesticide* compilation. *D-7*, originally by The Wipers, was a B-side to the UK issue of the *Lithium* single, with *Even In His Youth* and *Aneurysm* released as B-sides for *Smells Like Teen Spirit* in the UK. The recording of *Aneurysm* is different to the version on *Incesticide*, but would later be released as part of the *With The Lights Out* boxset in 2004. ***Glen Bushell***

CREAM OF THE CROP

Still revered as one of the most pioneering bands of all time, Cream are credited with inventing everything from the supergroup, to jam-rock, to heavy metal, to breakthrough guitar tones. With the new six-LP boxset of their 1966 debut about to hit the shelves, **Michael Leonard** tells the story of the original album's genesis and speaks to the boxset's executive producer, Bill Levenson

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Chickenfoot. Velvet Revolver. Supergroups don't always have the greatest names, it seems – a joke or afterthought often seems to do. But the original, Cream, at least thought about it. They were christened 'the cream', as in 'cream of the crop'. Kickstarting an era when instrumental prowess – over and above songcraft, image or even innovation – was king, Cream had lofty ambitions, too. Yet, just like the real thing, they soured all too quickly.

For the band's biggest star, Eric Clapton, Cream remains a milestone and a millstone. It 'made' him, but also broke him. He hoped it was going to be "experimental and funny and rebellious", but it ended up "a failed experiment", a benchmark for battling egos, confused aims and wayward self-importance. Such things happen, it seems, even to 'Gods'.

"We got into a lot of self-indulgence and a lot of easily pleased people went along with that," Clapton later reflected. "It flattered our vanity, and after that, I think we stopped trying."

Even so, Cream remain fascinating…

The trio's early days are laid bare on the new six-LP Deluxe Edition of *Fresh Cream*, with stereo and mono mixes of the album, B-sides, BBC sessions, non-UK versions of tracks and even seven new stereo mixes of tracks. It simultaneously highlights Cream's greatest powers and, perhaps, their biggest failings.

The alliance of Clapton, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker was a tricky one. All three knew each other well and wanted to play together again, yes. But on more than one occasion, Bruce stated that he and Baker – when they weren't fighting – saw Cream very much as a vehicle for progressing their own jazz/improv backgrounds. Eric Clapton had quit The Yardbirds for John Mayall because the 'birds weren't bluesy enough, but after Mayall? Clapton wanted Cream to emulate the trio of his hero, Buddy Guy. ▶

CLAPTON WANTED CREAM TO SURPRISE PEOPLE, TO BE ACCEPTED AS MORE THAN JUST A BLUES BAND

"It seemed to me you could do anything with a trio," Clapton said of Cream's conception, "at least if you were a genius and a maestro like Buddy Guy. I was suffering from delusions of grandeur in that direction." And, for his part, manager Robert Stigwood was much closer to Clapton than he was to Bruce or Baker (Stigwood would continue to manage EC post-Cream). Yet if Stigwood saw Cream as a way of elevating even 'God' higher – to frontman, fashion leader and pop star – he had something of a challenge on his hands.

"Maybe I had something of the technical ability, or was at least heading in the right direction," Clapton later judged. "But I didn't have the confidence, or anything like it. I was seeing Buddy Guy and thinking, 'I can do that'. But, in fact, I'd never really sung in my life. I'd seen myself as the front guy with Cream. But when we got there, the reality was that Jack was easily the best equipped for that role. And that's how it immediately evolved."

In the late Jack Bruce's words: "When we first got together, we had a competition to see who wouldn't be the singer. I didn't want to be singer, Eric didn't want to, either. I guess I lost."

FRESH SOUNDS

Full of three already-arguing headstrong characters, Cream's music was no one-man recipe. Moreover, *Fresh Cream* was no studiously planned project like The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* or The Beatles' *Revolver*. It was cut on the fly and you can hear that in the tracks on the Deluxe Reissue.

"The sessions start early August 1966, and go to December 1966," Levenson explains. "Cream had only only been together for a month or two. And the sessions were ad hoc. The first were in Rayrick Studios in London, later renamed Chalk Farm Studio. The band were playing a lot of shows around London, so it was just in and out, whenever they could. Then they moved on to Ryemuse (aka Spot Studios) in Mayfair. It was all four-track, they were a new band, no-one saw where this was going… There were no 'album sessions' as such. *Fresh Cream* is an indie record, in a lot of ways."

It's now renowned as a landmark album, but even a cursory listen reveals a band pulling all over the place. Levenson notes: "There's obviously the blues element – *Spoonful*, *Cat's Squirrel*, *Rollin' And Tumblin'*, *I'm So Glad* – but there's this other side that Ginger had been doing with Graham Bond. *Toad* isn't really even a song. It's not psychedelic, it's not blues, it's just a drum showcase. Then there's the Pete Brown (co-written) songs with Jack Bruce. They're

charming, but looking back, they're peculiar. *The Coffee Song*, *Wrapping Paper*, *N.S.U.*... It's true, The Yardbirds were also mixing pure pop songs and blues songs, but it's more odd that Cream started with *Wrapping Paper*. I can't think of a weaker song to début with!"

On the BBC Radio interview included on the *Fresh Cream* reissue, Clapton explains that he wanted Cream to "surprise people: not just be accepted as a blues band [but] more than that". A surprise, *Wrapping Paper* certainly was. The hazy Bruce/Brown jazz number bombed and Clapton himself actually disliked it. Then again, Clapton had no songs of his own to offer. Ginger Baker later judged *Wrapping Paper* as: "the most appalling piece of shit I've heard in my life".

"It's telling that *I Feel Free* was the second single," notes Levenson. "That's more blues-ish, but it's also a real powerful song."

I Feel Free, although another Bruce/Brown composition, certainly has endured and among its four versions, the new Deluxe Reissue of *Fresh Cream* features a vocal-less mix of *I Feel Free,* which highlights just how tight a trio Cream were. Yet throughout *Fresh Cream*, Clapton is not credited with writing anything. Bruce's lyric in *N.S.U.* – "The only time I'm happy's when I play my guitar" – seemed to suit the guitarist's mindset. In an early *Rolling Stone* interview, Clapton opined: "That's where I want to be at: where I just don't ever have to play anything but improvisation."

What was that Clapton said about flattering his own vanity?

UNDER THE INFLUENCE
ERIC AND JIMI

As Cream developed, Eric Clapton become increasingly influenced by the rising Jimi Hendrix. But even with the same hair and exact same wah-wah pedal, it seemed Clapton couldn't really compete…

On 1 October 1966, Cream accepted a request that a young Jimi Hendrix – in the UK only weeks – come and jam at a Regent Street Polytechnic show. It didn't turn out to be much of a trading-licks session, though. Jimi came on and absolutely nailed *Killing Floor*, while Clapton watched in awe. According to folklore, EC told Jimi's manager, Chas Chandler, backstage: "You never told me he was that fucking good." Intentional or otherwise, "[Jimi] definitely pulled the rug out from under Cream," Clapton later admitted. "I told people like Pete Townshend about him and we'd go and see him."

Clapton and Jimi became friends and, yes, Eric suddenly had a curly perm. Townshend remembered, after he and EC compared notes: "What Eric did was… peculiar. He said, 'Well, I'm going to pretend that I *am* Jimi Hendrix!'"

After Jack Bruce had experienced a full Jimi show, Clapton remembered: "After the gig, Jack went home and came up with the riff [*Sunshine Of Your Love*]. It was strictly a dedication to Jimi. And then we wrote a song on top of it."

When Cream toured the USA in early 1967, Clapton bought his first wah pedal, a Vox: "They said that Jimi had one, and so that was enough for me. I had to have one, too."

Bill Levenson reckons: "You can hear the influence right away in Cream's February 1967 demos. There was definitely sounds of Hendrix in there, sounds of Townshend, the Jeff Beck Group, too. They were all trading off each other."

BUILDING THE BOXSET

Comprising six LPs, plus a 64-page hardcover book (unpublished photos, studio worksheets, original label images and an essay by US critic David Fricke), this Deluxe Edition boxset of *Fresh Cream* is nothing if not 'full fat'. Bill Levenson is used to it, though: he compiled Clapton's Grammy-winning *Crossroads* vinyl boxset, first issued in 1988. But this *Fresh Cream* project involved a great deal of work, even for him, as he tried to capture the best source material of the day, but also with a critical ear on whether it really adds to Cream's legacy 50 years on.

"We had to go a long way into the vaults – it was complicated," Levenson says. "There's the vault in New York, from Atlantic records, 60s tapes. Polydor UK had their vaults. And Germany had a sizeable vault, too. So we dug into all three and found the best of everything. There were some surprises, just in quality. Some of the tapes in Germany hadn't been touched in 50 years and were in better shape than the sources we'd normally rely on."

Even Cream collectors will be excited by some of the inclusions, in particular the mono mix of the whole album. "The mono version, apart from coming out as a limited edition in Japan a few years ago, is really hard to find," explains Levenson. "That's the one everyone gravitates towards so far, because it's got a very cohesive mix. The album in stereo [for a long time, the only version available], they're still feeling their way. I mean, how do you do a four-track record in stereo? It was done a lot, of course, in the 60s… but I don't think the guys really nailed it.

"Then there's extra tracks from other releases – the versions of *Wrapping Paper* and *The Coffee Song*, things that appeared on the Scandinavian album. Then there's the original US version of the album, with that particular running order. Plus the EPs from France. And those were alternative mixes.

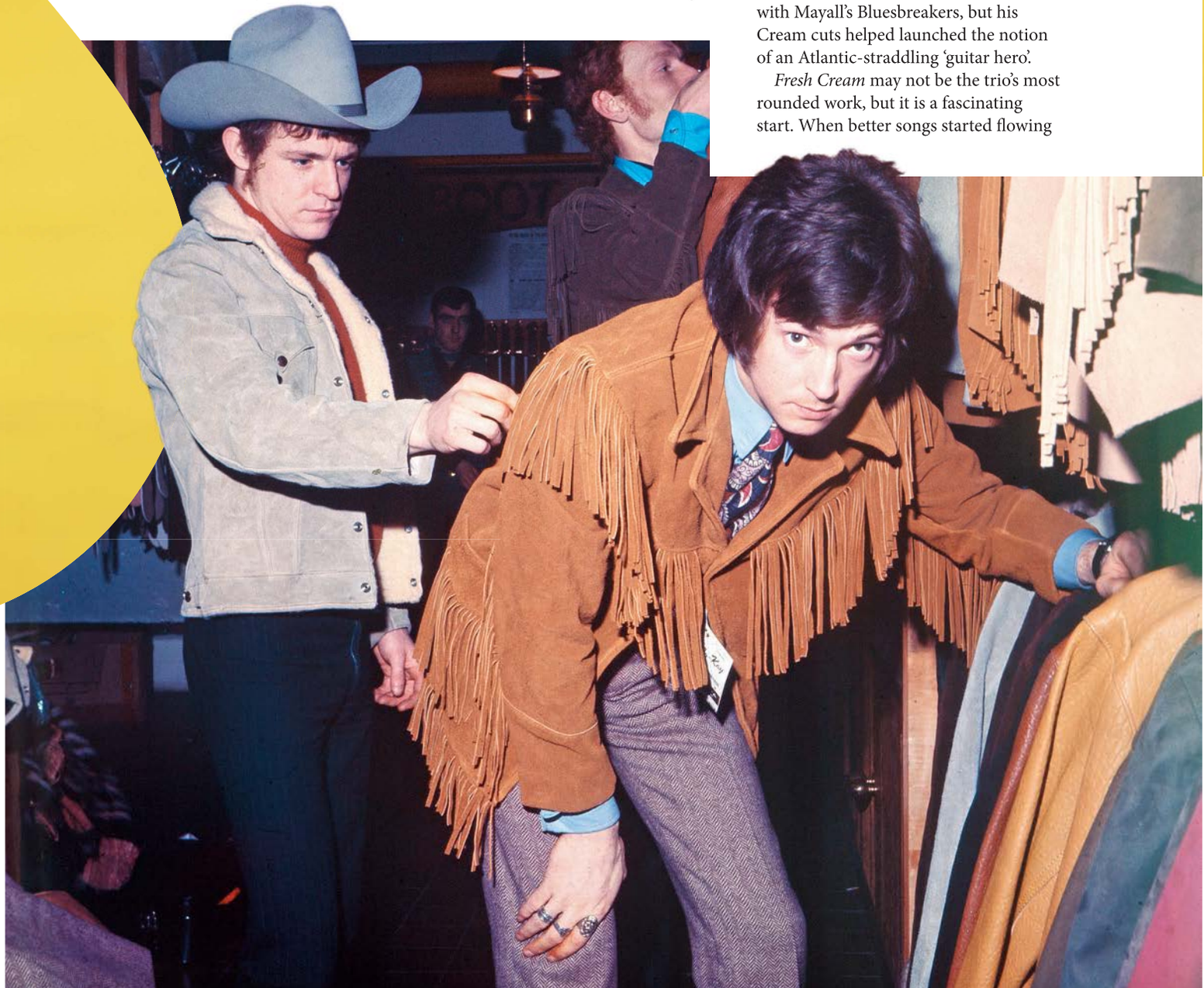
"And then there's seven new mixes that were done in London. It's just another perspective. Then we also included the early and alternate versions, plus everything we could find from the BBC session recordings. We know there was more recorded for the BBC, but we just can't find the sources. One session has definitely gone missing; others, the BBC have just lost track of. The BBC was notorious for allowing things to get lost! The intent was to find everything, but after a year or so, you just have to give up."

There's inevitably duplication of tracks issued before, but often over differing territories and certainly not on vinyl, apart from the original releases. Levenson accepts that some superfans will already own much of the actual material, but he believes that it's never been put together as a whole so well for the vinyl lover. "There's a lot of redundancy there, but it's there for a reason. I'm happy – to me, as a package, it really holds up."

FRESH CREAM IN CONTEXT

It's probably fair to say that Cream remains, even 50 years on, the most fascinating era in Eric Clapton's career. His 'God' rep in select circles was earned with Mayall's Bluesbreakers, but his Cream cuts helped launched the notion of an Atlantic-straddling 'guitar hero'.

Fresh Cream may not be the trio's most rounded work, but it is a fascinating start. When better songs started flowing



THE CREAM CATALOGUE

More Cream is hopefully getting the Deluxe vinyl treatment…

Cream only released four proper albums – *Fresh Cream*, *Disraeli Gears*, *Wheels Of Fire* (a half-live double) and the posthumous *Goodbye* (a 'mop up'), but the speed of change back then was immense. "That's why the sound of Cream varies so much," says Bill Levenson. "There's no resemblance, in terms of sonic template, in what they were doing in late '66 to mid '68. It's two lifetimes as we know it now." *Disraeli Gears* (featuring *Strange Brew*, *Sunshine Of Your Love*, *Tales Of Brave Ulysses* and recorded in the spring of 1967, six months after *Fresh Cream*) is the acknowledged psychedelic masterpiece from the catalogue, but Bill Levenson explains: "They did have a more concentrated session, but it wasn't longer than seven or 10 days."

There have been Deluxe double CD editions of both *Disraeli Gears* and *Wheels Of Fire* before, but rarely on vinyl. Is more now planned? "I'm going to assume we'll look at *Disraeli Gears* and *Wheels Of Fire* again," says Levenson. "There is live stuff that has never been released before – Scandinavian radio from early 1967, material from the final swing of the 1968 USA tour.

"Unfortunately, there's no more tapes of the Fillmore recordings used for *Wheels Of Fire*. Everything's been used now, on *Wheels Of Fire* and *Live Cream I* and *II*. There are some great bootlegs out there: there *might* be a way of releasing them officially. So there is a broad plan… but nothing settled. The only thing I know is people are still very interested in all this. And understandably so."

> "I THINK THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAYERS PROBABLY COLOURS ERIC'S OPINION OF WHAT THEY LEFT BEHIND"

from *Disraeli Gears* onwards – only a few months later, in reality – Cream became one of the hottest draws in late-60s music, and many believe that the band still represents the pinnacle of Eric Clapton's recorded work.

Jack Bruce still believed so in 1997. "I think that, musically, Cream was his high spot so far," Bruce told *Forbes*. "He was so good! He would be playing this shit that really took you to another place."

Yet Clapton himself was never as vocally enthusiastic. He has since called Cream a "failed experiment", and also "a glorious mistake. It ended up being a wonderful thing, but nothing like it was meant to be."

From the perspective of someone who studies Clapton's back catalogue closer than EC probably does himself, Bill Levenson offers: "I would never attempt to speak for Eric, but I think the relationship of the players probably colours his opinion of what they left behind. I would never say it was a 'failed experiment'.

"I can only speak personally. When *Fresh Cream* came out, I was 12 years old… and I missed it. But I did get *Disraeli Gears*, so went back to *Fresh Cream* immediately. So I've known the album for 50 years, it's just in my DNA. I sometimes find it hard to place in context, because what I hear is just a great record.

"This is the record, for me, that opened me up to all the other British blues bands. Everybody. Before the Mayall record, though I sure got that soon after. *Fresh Cream* set the template for me. It may not be fantastically recorded, but it's just so well executed. It's become as familiar and comfortable as any other landmark, be it *Revolver* or *Rubber Soul*, or *Are You Experienced*. Influence is a funny thing, when everything is moving so fast.

"It was a week-by-week event. *Fresh Cream* pre-dates *Are You Experienced*. Then *Are You Experienced* just pre-dates *Disraeli Gears*… one after another.

"It was an incredible time. It's hard to pinpoint the Big Bang, y'know? But… it starts with *Fresh Cream* as well as it does with anything." ●

Cream

FRESH CREAM (DELUXE EDITION BOXSET)

POLYDOR

Funny band, Cream. Not funny ha-ha you understand, but funny *peculiar*. Although so-named because they were 'the cream' of mid-60s London's musos, the alliance of Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker soured after 30 months – with this "shambling circus of diverse personalities" (Clapton's description) all wanting different things.

Cream nevertheless left behind a hugely influential catalogue of tunes, rich with psych-pop, pummelling freeform jams and outrageous heaviosity that set a benchmark for the yowling blues-rock of Led Zeppelin, Ten Years After, and even Black Sabbath that followed. Of the time, only The Jimi Hendrix Experience really compared.

Of the band's original four LPs, this 1966 debut is generally considered the weakest, largely because it lays bare Cream's schizophrenia from the off. *Wrapping Paper* is vaudevillian jazz, *I Feel Free* is Swinging London psych-pop, *Rollin' And Tumblin'* a bellowing blues cover hinting at their live power. Cream were always wild live; importantly, they also got sharper in the studio.

But if you can handle early Cream's scattershot approach, you'll be deeply rewarded here. The original mono mix of the album – never released on CD – smacks like a sledgehammer, and makes the somewhat forced stereo mix (harmony vocals/guitar solos panned left channel, full band panned right) feel almost redundant – though it's included here anyway. Somewhat boldly, there are also seven *new* stereo mixes, some the same tracks, some alternative versions.

The extra tracks – B-sides, non-UK/EP tracks, some BBC sessions and 10 unreleased early/demo versions – are mostly the same songs, too, but there are gems.

The August-September 1966 demos of *The Coffee Song*, *Beauty Queen and I Feel Free* demonstrate precisely how Cream hit the ground sprinting. For every time you think to yourself, 'Do I really need *four* versions of Ginger Baker's glorified drum solo *Toad*?' you'll also be dissecting how Eric Clapton's playing differs from take to take.

This set's delight and devil is in such detail. The 64-page hardcover book boasts unseen pictures, original singles sleeves, photos of studio boxes, an essay by *Rolling Stone's* David Fricke *et al*, but no input from survivors (neither Clapton nor Baker).

The 180g vinyl mono mix punches hard, but über-fans may be mildly disappointed at the discs' Polydor labels, instead of the original Reaction (UK) or ATCO (US) designs.

Ultimately, for bringing together pretty much everything in their debut's studio archive, this package is extremely well put together. If you crave a full feast, dig in: this is the definitive, all-you-can-eat, serving of *Fresh Cream*. *Michael Leonard*

VERDICT

4/5

U2
THE JOSHUA TREE
ISLAND

When it was originally released, *The Joshua Tree* took everyone a little by surprise. U2 were already big, but not massive.1984's *The Unforgettable Fire* had reached No. 1 in the UK, but only No. 12 in the US. The title track had reached No. 6 in the UK, but hadn't charted in America. They were on a par – in one way or another – with the likes of Simple Minds, Big Country and INXS.

But with their fifth album, U2 happened on the exact chemical formula to go from 'group' to 'icon'. Two parts songwriting to one part production; one part image to two parts myth-making. Whatever the exact formula, they lifted off in America first and the rest of the world followed.

In the UK, for example, the first two singles – *With Or Without You* and *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* – went to No. 4 and No. 6 respectively. But in the US, they were both massive No. 1 hits. So, by the time the third single – *Where The Streets Have No Name* – arrived, U2 were quite simply the biggest band on the planet.

But *The Joshua Tree* didn't sell just on account of the singles. It was conceived as an album, and it was reviewed as a great album. It was one of the last great albums of the 80s, in fact, and possibly one of the last iconic albums of the 'physical' generation.

So, U2 are probably more pleased than any of us about the vinyl revival. They've certainly used the format lavishly to recreate their biggest-selling statement, across seven platters.

On LP1 and LP2: the original *Joshua Tree* double album. LP3 and LP4 have a 17-track live concert from Madison Square Garden in 1987. LP5 houses, rather incongruously, a series of 2017 remixes, including *Running To Stand Still* by Daniel Lanois and *Red Hill Mining Town* by Steve Lillywhite. An interesting idea, but there are other U2 albums – *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa*, of course – which are made for the remix treatment, and some which just don't need to be tampered with. LP6 offers a set of eight outtakes. And the whole set signs off with LP7, which rounds up the seven B-sides from the era. The paper parts of the boxset are suitably heavyweight. Not exhaustive by any means, it's a case of quality over quantity. There's a folio of eight Anton Corbijn colour prints – a valuable art piece in itself – and a hardback book of *Photographs By The Edge*, which gathers the guitarist's personal shots from from the original Mojave Desert sessions, and for which he also penned a personal foreword.

The *Joshua Tree* era is as much about how the group transformed themselves as a live proposition as on record, so possibly the best added-extra this box could come with would be a ticket to the group's latest stadium tour. It'll be interesting to find out how a band so fearless of the future will deliver what is their first deliberately 'retro' show. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

●●●●○

4/5

Leftfield

LEFTISM 22

SONY

22 years later, one of the great debuts of the 1990s is reissued on triple vinyl. And as soon as the needle hits *Open Up* – the juggernaut of a single with John Lydon on guest vocals – you remember how Leftfield blew the minds of the old-guard rock press. Here was dance music meeting punk royalty, going 10 stages further than the likes of Pop Will Eat Itself had ever dreamed of; paving the way for The Prodigy to extend the idea into a genre in itself.

Leftism was shortlisted for the 1995 Mercury Music Prize, though lost out to the year's even bolder statement, *Dummy* by Portishead. If any evidence was needed of just how 'All Time Greatest' polls are swayed by the music of the moment – and how, sadly, the potential of this debut was never built upon – you need only to look back at the press clippings of the day to see *Leftism* voted '80th Greatest Album Of All Time' by readers of *Q* in 1998 (indeed, *Q* also placed it at No. 34 in the 100 Greatest British Albums Ever in 2000).

Although download only, of the 11 additional remixes, we would suggest you head for Adrian Sherwood's new version of *Release The Pressure* (the original of which appeared on one of the great soundtracks of 1995, for one of the worst films of that year, *Judge Dredd*). The Hodge & Peverelist Mix of *Afro-Left*, the Maafi Mix of *Inspection (Check One)* and the Adesse Versions Mix of *Original* are also standouts. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5

Manic Street Preachers

SEND AWAY THE TIGERS

SONY

A 10th-anniversary reissue of the eighth studio album by the Manics, this was the one that looked like a surefire No. 1 hit when it was released in May 2007. That was until the Arctic Monkeys pipped them to the post by just a few hundred copies and, with *Favourite Worst Nightmare*, ushered in a new era of indie-rock that had us worried the Manics were past their prime.

But, listen back and it feels like an effortlessly strong statement. Not least the single *Your Love Alone Is Not Enough*, in which James Dean Bradfield duetted with Nina Persson of The Cardigans.

The vinyl edition holds up well against its CD counterpart. While the latter adds a DVD (with a full Glastonbury gig), the former has one extra exclusive demo track. So 10 unreleased demos, across Sides C and D of this two-LP gatefold set. The highlights are home-cassette demos, including the 60's Jangle version of *Your Love Alone Is Not Enough*, and acoustic renditions of *I'm Just A Patsy* (the exclusive vinyl track) and *Indian Summer*. Signed versions sold out in mere hours. If only signed, pre-order editions and web stores had been chart-eligible 10 years ago, the album would have been a No. 1 for sure. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5

Deep Purple

INFINITE

EARMUSIC

Is this the last hurrah for legendary rockers Deep Purple? All the signs would suggest so. Thankfully, for the most part, *inFinite* sees them deliver a final flourish on what could be their swansong. Acclaimed producer Bob Ezrin (he of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and Lou Reed's *Berlin*) is back at the controls once again and he builds on the rapport he shared with Purple on their last album, 2013's well-received *Now What?!*.

It's a consistent collection with more than a few nuggets to add to the usual setlist staples on the Long Goodbye tour about to do the rounds. In the making-of documentary *From Here To Infinity* that accompanies some formats of *inFinite*, frontman Ian Gillan explains: "I used to be an angry young man and now I'm fucking furious again!", and that ire translates into Purple's swearest album to date. Far from slinking off quietly into the sunset, the boys are being dragged kicking and screaming over the finishing line.

Grandiose opener *Time For Bedlam* is not short of lyrical Spinal Tap-isms: "Descending the cold steps of the institution for the politically insane/ Never to be seen again, saying farewell to daylight/ From henceforth I shall rot in a stinking bed of wet straw," intones a portentous Gillan. Once the heavy riffing takes over, we're on surer footing, with keyboard player Don Airey doing a sterling job once again of filling the swirling chasm of the band's original organ grappler, the late Jon Lord.

Hip Boots is pretty feisty, too. "You can bury me up to my knees in shit/ Or anything else, I don't mind one bit/ You think I'm gonna drown but you're wrong/ 'Cos man I got my hip boots on," growls Gillan. You'd have thought *Hip Operation* might have been more appropriate in DP's circumstances, but no, this is swaggering stuff. Guitarist Steve Morse is on rocking form with a stellar solo, too.

The defiantly retro *All I Got Is You* makes no concessions to the modern age and is all the better for it – they've earned it, after all. Airey is once more Man Of The Match, with a wonderfully 70s-proggy organ solo.

One Night In Vegas is another decent heavy-rocking band effort, but rather hamstrung by lacklustre lyrics (a true story, though, apparently), while *Get Me Outta Here* is nicely diverse, melding lurching riffs with funky guitar plus a super-heavy drum pattern from Ian Paice. *The Surprising* is a rather exotic detour full of interesting Moroccan textures and melodies, and the simple story song *Johnny's Band* retells a typical rise and fall trajectory of a rock group – it's fun and frothy, but rather wastes a decent Morse riff. Meanwhile, Gillan's spoken word contribution to *On Top Of The World* is wonderfully silly. Special mention, too, must go to Morse's suitably soaring solo on the superb *Birds Of Prey*.

If Purple bow out like this, there'll be no complaints from the faithful. It's an intoxicating brew. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

●●●●○

3/5

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds

LOVELY CREATURES

MUTE RECORDS

After 2016's brutally personal *Skeleton Tree*, this triple-vinyl best-of (1984-2014) compilation makes one thing clear: Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds are a band. No one is dispensable. Okay, so 10 of the 14 albums they reissued on vinyl in 2014 and 2015 – up to and including 2004's *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre Of Orpheus* – do feature Nick Cave on the cover. But open the gatefold sleeve here and there are photos of every member, past and present: from the scowling figure of Einstürzende Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld to Cave's current right-hand man Warren Ellis via Kid Congo Powers, Jim Sclavunos and the rest. Then there's the music. Selected by Cave and founding Bad Seed Mick Harvey, it reveals the subtle shifts in sound that came with every incoming and outgoing. The urgency of Bargeld's playing on *Deanna* and *The Mercy Seat*, both from '88, is in contrast to the stately *Nature Boy* from 2004, when he'd left the band. 10 tracks longer than their 1998 roundup, *Lovely Creatures* takes us up to the spectral lurking of *We No Who U R* from 2013's *Push The Sky Away* before ending with a hoof-to-the-face: *Stagger Lee*. Written by Cave and six Bad Seeds, it's a fitting finalé. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

●●●●● 5/5

alt-J

RELAXER

INFECTIOUS MUSIC

Though weighing in at a mere eight tracks, at times, alt-J's third album has a Zappa-esque ideas-per-tune ratio. So *Hit Me Like That Snare* has an outro chant of "*Fuck You/ I'll Do/ What I wanna do*", having counted to 10 in Japanese over a ragged Pixies-esque surf-rock jam – and that's the most direct song on the LP. The overall mood is much more pastoral, though: previously shared opener *3WW* is hushed and acoustic driven and flickers like a dying flame; it's joined by an incongruous reworking of *House Of The Rising Sun* and the dream-like *Last Year*, which has the fragility of early Sufjan Stevens; while *Adeline*'s swirling strings and backing vocals are reminiscent of the folky drama of Fleet Foxes or Midlake. And closer *Pleader* is a hymn-like orchestral exploration that's out on its own.

Thankfully, there are tunes to sit alongside the likes of *Breezeblocks, Tesselate* and *Left Hand Free*. Single *In Cold Blood* shows off alt-J's repertoire of unique musical devices and powerful guitar-and-brass interplay, while *Deadcrush*, with its crazed falsetto vocals, is instantly satisfying. After a few listens, it all makes perfect sense. On standard vinyl, through a quality system or headphones, the production reveals hidden layers with amazing separation and dynamic range. The creativity here demands your undivided attention, but you'll be rewarded. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5

Fleet Foxes

CRACK-UP

NONESUCH

Hipster darlings and leaders of a highbrow nu-folk movement in the noughties, Fleet Foxes rather unexpectedly ran aground with their 2011 second album, *Helplessness Blues*. It lacked the bucolic joyousness of their eponymous debut and the band appeared to lose momentum.

Since then, solo albums, side projects and the exit of drummer Josh Tillman – now trading as Father John Misty, of course – may have indicated Fleet Foxes had been parked in the sidings indefinitely.

The album's title is influenced by an F Scott Fitzgerald essay of the same name, the cut-and-paste editing style by which many of these songs have been assembled and frontman and songwriter Robin Pecknold's *alma mater*, Columbia University, where he enrolled in 2013. Never a band who can be accused of not taking themselves seriously enough, *Crack-Up* is an ambitious beast, and not without its fair share of pretension either. Three-part opener *I Am All That I Need/Arroyo Seco/Thumbprint Scar* is an odd mixture of beatific stacked harmonies and lo-fi mumbling from Pecknold. By the end, a lush string section briefly kicks in before various watery sound effects. It's more nu-psych than nu-folk. Fleet Foxes obsessives will be delighted to discover it's directly linked musically to *Helplessness Blues*' closing track *Grown Ocean*, which ended in a tantalisingly unresolved fashion.

The driving *Cassius* is more traditionally structured, with those trademark stacked harmonies. The calming *Naiads, Cassadies* is quite beautiful: "Who stole the light from you?/ Who turned you so against you?" sings Pecknold, against a stripped-back arrangement. Even better is his echo-drenched vocal turn on *Kept Woman*.

The album's centrepiece is the sprawling, near-nine-minute *Third Of May/Odaigahara*. It's a reflection by Pecknold of how his relationship with guitarist Skyler Skjelset has endured (3 May is Skjelset's birthday). "I can hear you, loud in the centre/ Aren't we made to be crowded together, like leaves?" It's experimental, odd and pleasantly meandering.

Knowing that *Mearcstapa* is an acronym for 'Monsters: the Experimental Association for the Research of Cryptozoology through Scholarly Theory And Practical Application' might not help you unpick its oblique lyrics, but hey, who doesn't love a good acronym?

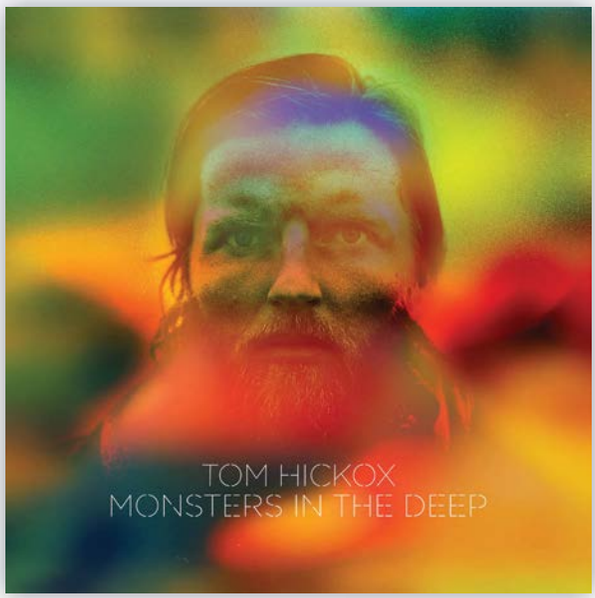
On Another Ocean (January/June) boasts a neat, disquieting tempo change and more soaring vocals. *Fool's Errand* features an unexpected tacked-on coda that provides more evidence of the album's cut-up modus operandi in terms of arrangements. At times, the sheer lyrical obliqueness of the likes of *I Should See Memphis* can render *Crack-Up* rather impenetrable. And yes, there's another woozy adjunct of a coda here, too, which obfuscates things further.

Beautiful and baffling in equal measure, *Crack-Up* is a whole sonic world that's destined to be pored over and unpicked for years to come.

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

4/5



Tom Hickox

MONSTERS IN THE DEEP

FAMILY TREE

Described by one national newspaper as: "The most powerful and original lyrical songwriter this country has produced in years," on the release of his debut album – 2014's *War, Peace And Diplomacy* on Fierce Panda – and now about to head out on tour supporting Julian Cope, the reasons are stacking up to take what may be your first delve into the world of Tom Hickox. Musically, this is far more playful than you'd expect, especially on songs such as *Istanbul*, which begins optimistically ("I'll bring you chocolate, I'll bring you peaches/ We'll drink tequila on exotic beaches") and ascends from there.

SoundCloud stats show that by far the most popular track here is *The Fanfare*, which certainly has an energy and a commercial edge that's parked throughout the rest of the album in favour of more experimental whimsy.

But the standout here is the minimalist *Collect All The Empties* – in which the kick-drum beats are so subtle as to be almost indistinguishable from pops and crackles of surface noise on the (120-gram, incidentally) vinyl. This and the whole album are shot through with a melancholy Scott Walker tilt, a Colin Vearncombe shade of black and a sense of David Lynch's night music that makes *Monsters In The Deep*, even in its lighter or more romantic moments, pull heavily on the heart strings. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

4/5

Erasure

WORLD BE GONE

MUTE

Synth-pop is a much maligned term. In fact, in 2017, it seems to have been all-but abandoned by its original exponents. OMD are transforming into a latter-day northern Kraftwerk. Depeche Mode are still recovering from becoming stadium-rock gods. It seems it's been left to Erasure to fly the flag for synth-pop, a job they tackle here as poetically as they've ever done.

It's worth noting, in terms of discographical output, Vince and Andy put both the aforementioned groups to shame. Best-ofs aside, this is their 17th album; *Love You To The Sky* is their 54th single. The quality remains high, especially on the almost Take That-esque *Still It's Not Over* and the ambling, reflective *Lousy Sum Of Nothing*.

Love You To The Sky is a determined attempt at a summer-pop anthem. "You can be my summer romance," intones Andy Bell, adding knowingly: "You know that I'm laughing inside/ You can see through my disguise... I want to climb inside your head/ I'm stronger to know that you care."

The project has some cool, vinyl-specific elements, including a limited-edition run on orange vinyl (and also a cassette edition). And the first 500 fans to place a pre-order were treated to the nice touch of having their name added to the album artwork and a signed edition. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

3/5

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The Charlatans

DIFFERENT DAYS

BMG

The Charlatans' run of singles from *Indian Rope* (1990) to *A Man Needs To Be Told* (2001) made them an essential seven-inch band among collectors of big-hearted indie. So it's a boon for long-term fans that they're releasing a 10-track version of their 13th album as a set of five 7"s as well as full 13-track versions on black and clear wax. Like 2015's *Modern Nature*, it also helps erase that forgettable period from 2004 to 2010.

Frontman Tim Burgess has recorded with musicians as disparate as Lambchop's Kurt Wagner and cult disco man Peter Gordon recently and this adventurousness fuels *Different Days*. There's a serene, post-rave sensibility on *Hey Sunrise*, *There Will Be Chances* and *The Same House*, and their recognisably groovy sound is re-energised on the tracks *Plastic Machinery*, *Not Forgotten* and *Over Again*.

Different Days is such an unexpected joy that the guest appearances of the likes of Stephen Morris, Johnny Marr, Sharon Horgan and Paul Weller, among others, become just minor talking points. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

4/5

New Order

NOMC15

MUTE

New Order's unpredictability as a live act seems to be a distant memory now. The latest incarnation, with Gillian Gilbert back in the fold once again, is pretty much always on the money as this album – culled from a Brixton Academy gig in 2015 – more than amply demonstrates.

It's a diverse setlist boasting highlights from their superb latest studio effort *Music Complete*, plus early years New Order cupboard-raiding (*Ceremony, Lonesome Tonight, Your Silent Face*) as well as Joy Division classics (*Atmosphere and Love Will Tear Us Apart)*.

The spectacular *Singularity* sees them sprinting out of the blocks, with drummer Stephen Morris on punishing form. *Crystal* is similarly sparky and the proto-*Blue Monday* (also included here) of *586* was well worth dusting off. And yes, *Bizarre Love Triangle* and *True Faith* are similarly top-grade.

A finely chosen setlist that goes nicely off-piste at times. Pick up the triple-vinyl set for the full experience. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

4/5

Little Dragon

SEASON HIGH

BECAUSE MUSIC

Critically lauded since they broke through around 2010, this Swedish electronic band, showcasing the sinuous, soulful vocals of Yukimi Nagano are actually entering into their third decade together. This fifth outing features production by Patrik Berger and Simian Mobile Disco's James Ford, and there's a sense of the latter's seamless, adept mixing of pop arrangements and dancefloor nous throughout. As ever, there's subtly unfurling sonic variety: from the sophisticated, spacious 80s pop of opening track *Celebrate* to the almost chillwave-esque lope of *High*, contrasting with *The Pop Life* (which feels like a more urgent up-tempo update of 2011 SBTRKT/collaboration *Wildfire)* and the direct yet addictive echoing bass of *Sweet*. *Butterflies*' beautiful synthscapes contrast with the more melodic bass-driven pair *Strobe Light* and *Push*, before the lush atmospheres of experimental closer *Gravity* somehow bring the whole shebang together – to round off a satisfyingly coherent set, with darker depths lurking behind Nagano's always-amazing voice. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

4/5

Feist

PLEASURE

POLYDOR

Leslie Feist's fifth full-length picks up where 2011's *Metals* left off – underlining her position as an artist of significantly more depth than fans hooked in by the cutesy and extensively played *1234* single from 2007's *Reminder* might presume. The title track is a visceral, spiky PJ Harvey-like opening salvo with fuzzed-up guitars, paving the way for the conversely sparse *I Wish I Didn't Miss You*. *Lost Dreams* walks a tightrope between discordance and dreamy reflection. These aren't songs shorn of pop sensibilities, though, as the hooky *A Man Is Not His Song* attests, but they bare their teeth and are drawn out to their full expansive potential – no radio-friendly brevity on this double album. Only the final two tracks slip under four minutes each, with Jarvis Cocker making an unexpected cameo for the second half of the sprawling *Century*.

Never before has Feist sounded so raw, edgy and multi-dimensional. Committed fans will want to opt for the Deluxe edition, which comes with beech-wood LSTN Troubadour headphones with vegan leather earpads, a wooden box and a pair of embroidered patches. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

4/5

The Afghan Whigs

IN SPADES

SUB POP

It's a pleasure to see Afghan Whigs return with their first full-band album since 1996's *Black Love*. After the sweeping strings and hushed vocals of opener *Birdland*, recalling Greg Dulli's childhood in Ohio, the Whigs shift through the gears on the pummelling, tribal *Arabian Heights*. A guitar tone George Harrison would surely have appreciated is put to use on the gloriously catchy *Demon In Profile*, while *Toy Automatic* rises to soulful grandeur, carried on ecstatic horns, in under three minutes. The T. Rex riffing of *Copernicus* offers surreal lyricism: "Listen in the distance as the sky begins to fall/ Raining down like crystalline/ Apocalypse in thrall." The funky groove of *Light As A Feather* continues the explorative theme. *Into The Floor* is power-ballad via post-rock filter, and the footnote to a record that finds the band reminding us what made them one of the most cherished American alt-rock acts of the 90s. *In Spades* is released on 180-gram white vinyl. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

4/5

White Sea

TROPICAL ODDS

CREPUSCULE

A worthwhile purchase for fans of M83 (see our The Best of Record Store Day selection from last issue), *White Sea* being the solo alias of the Alaska-born co-writer and keyboardist Morgan Kibby. Having joined M83 in 2007, her work can be heard on their albums *Saturdays = Youth* and *Hurry Up, We're Dreaming*.

Tropical Odds comes from an artist whose extra-curricular activities have taken in remixes for Ellie Goulding and Britney Spears and collaborations with Panic! At The Disco, Mark Ronson and School Of Seven Bells. And it's effectively a compilation of all of the tracks she has been releasing as digital singles and videos through her website across the past couple of years. File alongside School Of Seven Bells' recent, heart-wrenching swansong *SVIIB*. Though let's petition the label for a download code, as the CD has an extra track, *Lessons*, that's not on the vinyl. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

4/5

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Alison Moyet

OTHER

COOKING VINYL

Building on the critical and commercial success of her seventh studio album, *the minutes*, Moyet returns four years later with *Other* – and reconnects even more fully with her roots in electronica. Producer and co-writer Guy Sigsworth is back on board, too, and the quality threshold never dips. The dramatic opener, the glitchy electro of *I Germinate* with its slow-building chorus and the graceful Massive Attack-like *Lover, Go* are bold statements of intent.

Even better is the extraordinary *Beautiful Gun*, with its head-spinning guitar riffs – one of the most striking things she's done. *The English U* sways gracefully in the breeze and *The Rarest Birds* is Moyet at her balladeering best. The sleek synth-pop of *Reassuring Pinches* and the spoken-word *April 10th* are a nice change of pace. Moyet's mature lyrics are well observed and the arrangements sound up-to-date, while still acknowledging her 80s roots. Impressive stuff. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

4/5

Mac DeMarco

THIS OLD DOG

CAPTURED TRACKS

Mac DeMarco's fifth release in five years was written while moving from New York to LA. Its gently reflective slacker-rock ruminations on getting long in the tooth feature the sounds of his new CR-78 drum machine, with DeMarco noting of *This Old Dog:* "I was trying to make *Harvest* with synthesisers." While there's a little of Neil Young's reflective storytelling present, that description is a bit of a red herring. DeMarco's dry observational writing ("Uh-oh, looks like I'm seeing more of my old man in me") is astute and likeable, and he floats into Lennon-esque territory on the woozy synth romance of *For The First Time. Moonlight On The River* descends from sleepy acoustic meanderings to wonderful panning sonic experimentalism over the course of seven minutes. A limited run of 4,000 coloured pressings with an alternative gatefold sleeve sold out on pre-order, and it's clear that this not-so-old dog has plenty of life in him yet. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

3/5

Marika Hackman

I'M NOT YOUR MAN

UNIVERSAL

A hearty laugh sets the tone for the opening track of Marika Hackman's second album, leading into the playful lead single *Boyfriend* – a tongue-in-cheek blast that wouldn't have sounded out of place in the darker shadows of Britpop. A mischievous exploration of sexuality ("I've got your boyfriend on my mind/ I think he knows he stayed with me last night"), it coexists happily with pop instincts, breezy harmonies and discordant screams. With London band The Big Moon providing instrumentation, *I'm Not Your Man* is a grittier affair than Hackman's debut *We Slept At Last*, exchanging metaphor for more direct reflections on sexuality and gender. The gentle, acoustic *Cigarette* at the end of the first side and the wonderfully bittersweet *I'd Rather Be With Them* provide some light and shade on a compelling record, which also comes in limited 'Loser' edition green vinyl with an orange swirl and a bonus seven-inch featuring the songs *AM* and *Majesty*. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

3/5

Mark Lanegan Band

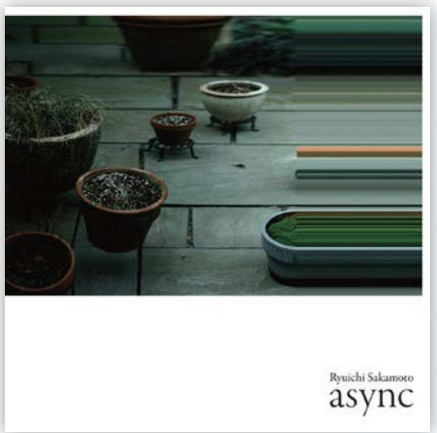
GARGOYLE

HEAVENLY RECORDS

The former Screaming Trees frontman's latest is a collaboration with English musician Rob Marshall, who co-wrote six of the 10 tracks on *Gargoyle*. A menacing Krautrock air pervades, with *Nocturne* a wonderful fog of driven reverb-heavy guitars, propulsive bass and Lanegan's weathered vocals. Former QOTSA bandmate Josh Homme contributes backing vocals to the surprisingly jaunty Kinks-eque *Emperor*, while there are also appearances from Greg Dulli of Afghan Whigs, producer Alain Johannes and multi-instrumentalist Duke Garwood. The sagely wistful, slide-guitar decorated *Goodbye To Beauty* and latter-day New Order-esque closer *Old Swan* are further highlights from a record that gives due credence to Lanegan's belief that he's at his best as a songwriter when he welcomes other musicians into his fascinating world. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

4/5



Ryuichi Sakamoto

ASYNC

MILAN

Composer Sakamoto's first solo album in eight years has been shrouded in secrecy; the tracks the subject of a very slow and gentle reveal to media and online audiences alike. Which is very much in keeping with Sakamoto's image, but is the complete opposite of what the music deserves. Because it's so good, so accessible and so moving – in an instrumental, abstract way – someone should be shouting from the rooftops about it. Certain tracks feel like a Spotify Music For Exam Revision playlist, but break into more and more distorted and twisted visions.

With core tracks recorded in New York, Sakamoto added field recordings from museums. Conceiving the LP as a soundtrack to "an Andrei Tarkovsky film that does not exist", he then played with – and this is a roll call of influences to be reckoned with – "ideas of asynchronism, prime numbers, chaos, quantum physics, and the blurred lines of life and artificiality/noise and music". *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

4/5

Coldcut x On-U

OUTSIDE THE ECHO CHAMBER

NINJA TUNE

This is a project that's made for vinyl: 10 tracks, 10 7" singles. The album version on the A-side, a dub mix on the B. Perfect. It's billed as 'electronic dub pop', and before stylus hit groove, I was expecting it to be weighted very much at the dub end of the spectrum. What with the presence of Adrian Sherwood, aka On U-Sound, and guest vocals and appearances from Doug Wimbish, Roots Manuva and Lee 'Scratch' Perry. But Coldcut put up a bold fight for the pop side and the whole set discovers new territory.

A prime example: the hook-centric electro of *Metro*, which feels like a throwback to the mid 80s, when Coldcut were starting out and were at home listening to On-U Sound. The album's closer – that is if you're streaming, for us, it's the A-Side of the 10th 7" – is *Livid Hip Hop*, a hands-in-the-air dub, Orb *...Ultraworld*-style, with a vocal that sounds something like a cross between an MC and an air horn. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

3/5

Luuna

MOONFLOWER EP

YOUNG THUGS

File this new four-track vinyl EP alongside Portishead and The xx. But be prepared when the needle hits the opening track, *Soap*, for a sound far brighter and more optimistic than either of those groups has so far ever achieved. After *Soap* drifts from percussive jazz territory into soulful pop, the A-side closes out with the drifting, bluesy *A Big Fat Something* (their first-ever song, which came into being, as did the trio, through a PRS-funded project for new talent), which calls to mind *The Sea*-era Morcheeba.

Remedy starts with more than a nod to Talk Talk, when they'd reached their *Laughing Stock* zenith, but with a female vocal that's equal parts pop to blues. Recorded, written and performed by a trio from York, tracks from this debut 7" have picked up spot plays on BBC Radio 1, BBC Music Introducing, and 6 Music – and deserve to spread even further.

Ian Peel

VERDICT

●●●○○ 3/5

Hekla

HEKLA

CAROLINE TRUE

For taking a new, creative look at both packaging and A&R, Caroline True Records is one of our favourite new labels. And calling on an intriguing mix of influences – Shangri Las, Ariel Pink, Joy Division and psychedelia – Hekla are one of their newest signings. There's an acoustic, shoegazing blend going on with opening track *Dover Calais* like a slightly harder-edged Saint Etienne. It's a sound that's developed further by the throbbing *I Deliver*, and the dreamy, Sarah Records-styled *Dirty Harry*. Pick up the stylus and move to the middle of Side Two and there's a heady blend of indie doom-pop and 60s organ work-out on *Desire*, which makes way for the song with the most single potential here, *Look Away*. Although limited to just 300 copies, the vinyl is the best format for this release, as it really brings to life the striking front-cover collage, specially created for Hekla by the artist Annica Åberg.

Ian Peel

VERDICT

●●●○○ 3/5

Holly Macve

GOLDEN EAGLE

BELLA UNION

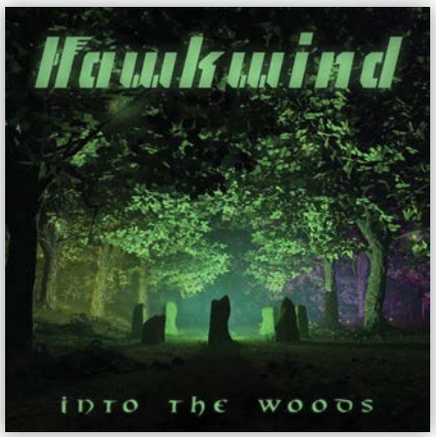
Galway-born, Yorkshire-raised Holly Macve belies her birthplace on this stunningly beautiful debut that sounds every bit as though it was written in Nashville and recorded at Sun Studio. Macve's beautiful, lilting head voice is utterly enchanting, evoking several great country legends from across the pond. The production, handled by Lanterns On The Lake guitarist and Bella Union label-mate Paul Gregory, is tasteful and sparing throughout, with some yearning slide guitar adornments on *The Corner Of My Mind* and strings and piano adding to the melancholy brew. *All Of Its Glory* is a mournful mid-album centrepiece of the finest quality. Macve's own acoustic guitar playing is crisp and clever with intelligent chord sequences, and the maturity of the compositions is impressive for a 21-year-old's debut release.

A recent whistlestop visit to the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas and tour of intimate UK venues showed Macve's sound translates readily to the live arena: an outrageous talent.

Gary Walker

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5



Hawkwind

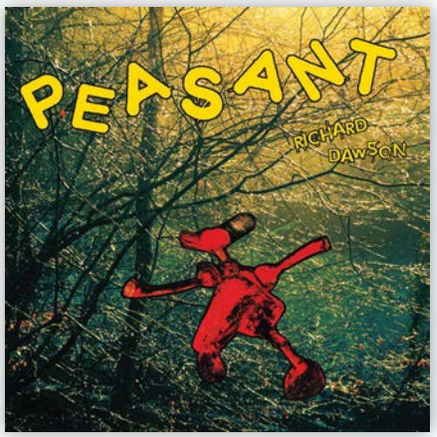
INTO THE WOODS

CHERRY RED

Last year saw something of a rebirth for Hawkwind, with their *The Machine Stops* concept album – we love a concept album at *Long Live Vinyl* – and live show inspired by the sci-fi literature of EM Forster. This year, they seem to have taken a more pastoral approach with *Into The Woods* and the accompanying warm-up shows entitled *A Glimpse Into Greenness*. But it's a still pretty spaced-out, synth-driven and heavy affair on record; the record in question here being a double vinyl in gatefold sleeve. Tracks such as *Cottage In The Woods*, *Space Ship Blues* and the moreish *Vegan Lunch* call to mind the harder edge of early nu-prog – the likes of Ozric Tentacles, Agents Of Chaos and the groups Hawkwind were playing the New Age and free-festival circuit with back in the 1990s – all of whom are much-missed 20 years later. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

3/5



Richard Dawson

PEASANT

WEIRD WORLD/DOMINO

After the Fred Frith and Captain Beefheart-likened meanderings of his peculiar 2014 album, *Nothing Important*, Newcastle's Richard Dawson is back with the most accessible album he's ever made. Everything is relative, of course. With an album about everyday life in the Old North during the Dark Ages, and songs called *Prostitute*, *Shapeshifter* and *Ogre*, Dawson hasn't exactly 'gone pop'.

Fans of *Nothing Important* and his earlier folk-improv albums *The Glass Trunk* and *The Magic Bridge* – reissued on vinyl in 2015 – won't feel cut adrift here. Dawson picks his dilapidated acoustic guitar as bewitchingly as ever, his odd melodies glinting through the creaking cacophony. But *Peasant*, released on yellow double vinyl with a set of 12 postcards, is more immediate – catchy, even – with Tom Waits' rattle-and-clank, traditional Eastern music, olde folk and communal psych-pop colliding as Dawson sings about "wizardbeard" and "rocktripe". It's strange music for strange times. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

4/5

Joshua Abrams

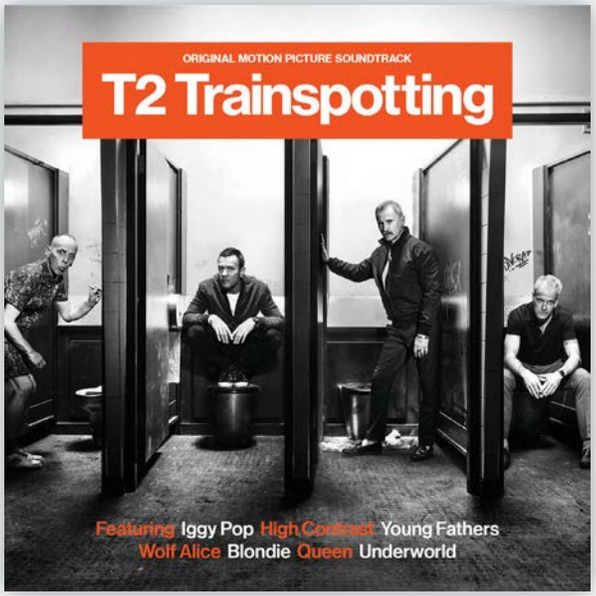
SIMULTONALITY

TAK:TIL/GLITTERBEAT

Joshua Abrams & Natural Information Society are veterans of Chicago's post-rock and experimental music scenes. That's the short version, anyway. Among those Abrams has played with are free-jazz sax legends Fred Anderson and Roscoe Mitchell, post-rock band Tortoise, hip-hop outfit The Roots and drone supremo Tony Conrad. It's a potted history that goes some way towards explaining the gently looping, Zen-like music Abrams makes under his own steam. On his fourth album as Natural Information Society, Abrams uses this background to create something all of his own. Playing a guimbri – a rubbery-sounding three-string bass from North Africa – he pilots his band along loose, unbounded grooves, weaving the repetitive minimalism of Terry Riley and The Necks, the meditative trance music of Alice Coltrane and North Africa, and the playful electronica of Tortoise into a hypnotic patchwork. It's the perfect release for a new label set up to explore "possible musics". *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

5/5



Various

T2 TRAINSPOTTING

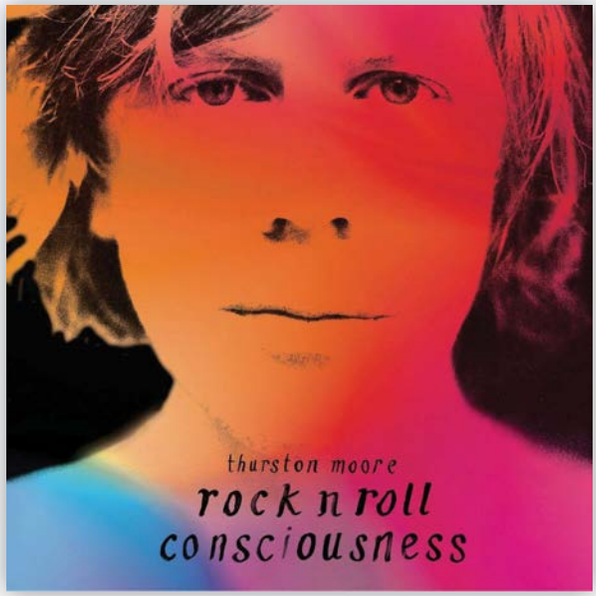
POLYDOR

The original *Trainspotting* soundtrack was one of the highest-selling CDs of the 90s. It had something for everyone – Iggy and Eno for the old school, Sleeper and Blur for the Britkids. The thought of releasing it on vinyl in 1996 would have been laughable, but it finally got an orange-vinyl repress last October. Then, in January, Underworld's new take on *Born Slippy* for *T2* was released on 12" and, in March, Young Fathers' closing credits score appeared on 7". Which now brings us to, finally, a double (black) vinyl edition of *T2*.

As with the original, there are the old-school classics, such as Frankie's *Relax*, and Queen's *Radio Ga Ga*. But there's a noticeable lack of modern-day indie, save for the soaring *Silk* by Wolf Alice. But these are mere distractions from the main draw: which is exactly the same as the main draw of the film. On screen, we wanted to see what had happened to the characters, and how different the actors looked and felt, after all these years. And on record, we want to find out, musically, how the lead players feel and sound now. So your needle will go straight for The Prodigy's remix of Iggy Pop's *Lust For Life* and Underworld's re-thought *Slow Slippy* – and you'll discover the musicians and music have matured far better than the actors and the story. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 3/5



Thurston Moore

ROCK N ROLL CONSCIOUSNESS

ECSTATIC PEACE LIBRARY

The cosmic-sounding title of Thurston Moore's new album would suggest otherwise, but the former Sonic Youth guitar strangler/enchanter said recently that he feels silly meditating. Instead, Moore finds his meditative state via the records and books he collects (vinyl collectors knew this already, right?). It's this idea of rock 'n' roll as an eternal spring of ideas and energy that occupies Moore on his fifth solo outing. The band is the same that played on 2014's impressive *The Best Day* album, which featured the exploratory guitar playing of James Sedwards, bassist Deb Googe and drummer Steve Shelley. There's a thrilling fluidity to this album's almost freeform movements: its five tracks incorporate many familiar Moore motifs – squalling no-wave; doomy noise; chiming space-rock; honeyed alt-rock dirges – but turn them into a furious rock deluge, played with the elasticity of free jazz. Again, Moore borrowed lyrics for the album – released on both double and single gatefold vinyl. But transgender poet Radieux Radio's otherworldly pieces about spell weavers, female oracles and awakened spirits all perfectly befit an album tapping into primal energies and alt-rock sorcery. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Chuck Berry

CHUCK

DUALTONE

The late, great Chuck chose his 90th birthday in October of last year to announce the forthcoming release of *Chuck* – his first original output since 1979's *Rock It*. Consisting of 10 diverse songs (eight of them originals) cut in and around St Louis, it's a family affair: Chuck dedicated it to his wife of 68 years, Themetta, and backing him throughout is the erstwhile Blueberry Hill Club Band, featuring his children, Charles Berry Jr. on guitar and Ingrid Berry on harmonica – other guests include his grandson, Charles Berry III, Tom Morello (yep) and Gary Clark Jr.

Thankfully, though, this is no hastily concocted project dragging in a roll call of celebrity musos for the sake of it. That's probably because Berry Sr had been working on the collection of songs for several years, and the collection was written between 1991 and 2014. From the off, it's a defiantly energetic and live-sounding record – mixing together driving rock'n'rollers reprising the music that Berry has filled the airwaves with for over six decades with touchingly reflective musings on his life and the nature of fame, seemingly left as gifts to his family.

Hence, opener *Wonderful Woman* nods to past favourite *You Never Can Tell* with its rhythmic vocal melody, his voice sounding like that of a man half his age; the song also features guitar from three generations of Berrys and Gary Clark Jr. *Big Boys* is the first reprise of Chuck's signature intro and is a retro school-daze tale, buoyed by a lead-guitar cameo from Tom Morello and an appearance from Nathaniel Rateliff. The tempo slows with an arrangement of *You Go To My Head*, a slow, bluesy duet soused in bittersweet alcohol analogies. *3/4 Time (Enchiladas)* is a live track that effortlessly weaves in Latin guitar styles while Chuck lists the major preoccupations he shares with the song's author, Tony Joe White: including cars, red guitars, women, wine and... enchiladas. Who knew?

Darlin' is shot through with nostalgic lyrics addressed to (and sung with) his daughter Ingrid, and is certainly a candidate for the Enchantment Under The Sea slow dance; while *Lady B. Goode* is another of Chuck's pilgrimages to his signature song, this time focusing on the lady behind the guitar star. *She Still Loves You* is a ballad underpinned by a skulking backbeat, with Chuck articulating every word of the vocal with purpose. His doublestop-laden solo throws in a few unexpected licks; while *Jamaica Moon*, a rewrite of 1956's *Havana Moon*, has drowsy twin-guitar interplay, island-love-affair harmonies, rum, a boat and liberal use of the word 'ting'. Penultimate track *Dutchman* is a barfly's spoken-word tale – Chuck, down on his luck. And finally, *Eyes Of Man* is a philosophical aubade, where Chuck imparts his hard-won life lessons.

And so ends the recording career of rock 'n' roll's ultimate pioneer, entertainer and showman, the glint never having left his eye. It's available in a limited-edition bundle comprising a 180g red vinyl, a T-shirt of the cover art and a photo book, as well as the standard vinyl release. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

●●●●●

5/5

Gimme Danger

DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY JIM JARMUSCH

Jim Jarmusch's history of The Stooges is a comprehensive chronicle of one of the most influential and vital acts in rock history, with the band's talismanic, death-defying frontman its chief narrator and raconteur. *Gimme Danger* opens with Iggy, now 70 yet remarkably sparkly eyed and cogent, recounting the band's spiral into oblivion in 1967 during the *Raw Power* tour. Fragments of shambolic live footage show the 24-year-old frontman bloodied, skeletal and strung out in the grip of heroin addiction. A show in a Detroit biker bar nearly has fatal consequences as he's knocked out cold; the band are pelted with bottles by hostile audiences, and the end nears.

There are contributions from late drummer Scott Asheton and eventual guitarist James Williamson as we flash back to Iggy's trailer park childhood. He recalls sitting atop a 16-foot drum riser in high-school band The Iguanas before joining the Prime Movers in 1966. A meeting with Butterfield Blues Band bassist Jerome Arnold provides a lightning-bolt moment – he tells Iggy: "When you play, play it like you mean it."

Iggy quotes Ron Asheton at the formation of The Stooges, saying "Let's just call it The Stooges, because we don't do anything wrong, but everybody's picking on us," and there's an unlikely phone call to Moe Howard of the Three Stooges to ask for permission to use the name. We then find the three Stooges huddled in the snow outside a Detroit rehearsal room, having their minds blown by The MC5, leading to a friendship between the bands and The Stooges signing to Elektra Records. Iggy is equally clear about the making of their eponymous debut, with half of the songs being written in the Chelsea Hotel the day before they went into the studio.

A move to LA and the influence of Steve Mackay's freeform saxophone leads to 1970's *Fun House*, and Iggy recounts a stage-diving accident that removed one of his front teeth.

Scott Asheton crashes the tour van into a bridge and the band are dropped by Elektra, with a company exec delivering the withering assessment: "I didn't hear a thing." Iggy shuts down the band for the first time, but via a meeting with David Bowie, they return with the era-defining, furiously loud *Raw Power* before addiction comes calling again, leading to being dropped by Columbia and a second break-up. The 2003 reunion is captured through some shaky live footage from Coachella, while Ron Asheton's death in 2009 is another hammer blow, with Iggy solemnly saying he still dreams of his old bandmate.

The Stooges' induction into the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame in 2010, with Iggy's defiant rebuke of "Music is life and life is not a business", completes a loving portrait by Jarmusch. While the true narcotic savagery of the era is largely absent, with the mayhem of the live footage brief, this is a compelling document befitting one of rock's most uncompromising bands. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

●●●●○ 4/5

AUDIO-TECHNICA
AT-LP5
+ ALR JORDAN CLASSIC 2 SPEAKERS & REGA BRIO AMP

£349 *www.audio-technica.com Reviewed on our test track at winchesterhifi.co.uk*

High-fidelity playback and modern bells and whistles are combined in this turntable, aimed at those of us who are rediscovering our passion for some needle time, says **Ian Peel**

If you want to sit back and enjoy new vinyl releases on a strong, audiophile deck, or if you require a reliable, accurate playback system for ripping all your old records to digital files, then this system aims to please on both counts.

The AT-LP5 has a J-shaped tonearm (far more adept than a straight arm at reducing tracking errors, it's claimed) and outputs either via phono, line stereo or USB. It's a direct-drive turntable with a cast-aluminium platter and comes ready-fitted with the AT95EX Dual Moving Magnet cartridge (available exclusively on this model) mounted on a lightweight headshell, the AT-HS10, with its very fetching gold-plated connections.

With a reassuringly minimalist design (and a nice, thick 5mm composite rubber mat), 33 1/3 and 45 RPM speeds are selected with a combined power/stop knob on the front left. To put the LP5 through its paces, we combined it with a tried-and-tested amp, the Brio 3 from Rega. Outweighing the turntable on price (it comes in at £598), the Brio 3 put this deck on the highest sonic pedestal available – clearly a far cry from simply plugging the USB output into your laptop.

Likewise, rather than listening back through computer speakers or headphones, we treated it to some very complementary speakers in the form of a pair of Classic 2s from the team at Essen's ALR Jordan – and these were given some room to breathe via a pair of very striking RS 203 stands by Custom Design.

We used the Rega amp to test the Planar 3 turntable in Issue 2, but this time, I took a moment to sit back and use a feature I overlooked last time and enjoy the remote control to trigger its powered, motor-driven volume knob.

TORQUE TALK

The first thing that struck me about this deck was the high torque of the drive belt. With a firm twist of the start/stop knob, the turntable was up to speed almost straight away. One thing I did notice, though, was that it is quite a microphonic deck, so it amplified my (rather less than gentle, I have to admit) thudding of the arm lever when I lowered the tonearm down to play my first test disc: though it has to be said that the volume was up very high and it was noticeable only on the intro's silent grooves. When I tried to replicate the sound when going inland on another of the test discs, it was, of course, entirely absent.

I dispensed with the included-as-standard Perspex cover and instantly found this to be a reassuringly heavy, nicely engineered deck. It's an interesting stay-at-home dad, compared to the refusing-to-grow-up uncle that is Audio-Technica's more DJ-focused AT-LP120. They're very similar price-wise and, for a comparison to other vendors, this deck sits right between Rega's Planar 1 and Planar 2.

The two test discs we used for this review couldn't have been been more different and were plucked from the *Long Live Vinyl* office collection, with the LP5's two main uses in mind. So, for latter-day audiophiles, a brand-new reissue of the 12" of Prince's *Raspberry Beret*; and for archive rippers, a very well-loved (ie, tremendously scratched and crackly) original edition of Stevie Wonder's *Hotter Than July*, aka 'The One With *Happy Birthday*'.

Raspberry Beret is one of a whole stack of reissued Prince vinyl that's

come from Warner Music this year. Last month, the label not only gave us this, but also very accurate replicas of the 12" editions of *Let's Pretend We're Married*, *U Got The Look*, *Cream*, *If I Was Your Girlfriend* and *Kiss*.

Uncredited, but remixed by Prince himself, the 6:36 New Mix (not 7:25 as stated on the artwork, an error replicated on this reissue) has a lot of space and room to breathe around all the instruments and sections, in what was an intentionally dense and psychedelic original. And the LP5 conveys all this with aplomb.

And how about the Stevie Wonder disc? Very impressive, actually, with strings and snares brought out to the fore. The vinyl was covered in scratches and wear and tear from over the years, but the AT-LP5 dealt with it surprisingly well, letting the crackles sit on top of the music, almost sonically separating it out. My enjoyment of the album's highlight – *Master Blaster* from the start of Side Two – wasn't spoilt one jot and, with the bundled Audacity software that comes with this turntable, you should be able to clean up, de-pop and de-hiss a recording of something such as this very easily before filing it away for iPod use. ●

VERDICT

PROS

USB CONNECTION
BUNDLED SOFTWARE
MINIMALIST DESIGN
SOLID BUILD
READY-FITTED CARTRIDGE

CONS

A LITTLE MICROPHONIC

SCORE
29/33⅓

LINN AKURATE LP12
+ LINN KRYSTAL CARTRIDGE & PHONOSOPHIE BI-AMP 1-4

£6,000 *www.linn.co.uk Reviewed on our test track at winchesterhifi.co.uk*

The Linn Sondek is the stuff of legend. **Ian Peel** teams up the company's current mid-range turntable with a set of complementary separates to create a £30,000 dream system

Linn has three ranges of turntable: at one end, there's the Majik, for those rediscovering vinyl. At the upper echelon, the Klimax, its 'ultimate' deck. And in the middle, focused very much on those who have moved into the world of sonic excellence – and want to experiment with different upgrades, parts and modules – is the Akurate.

To test it out, we built a dream system at our test track at Winchester Hi-Fi, pairing the Sondek up with a Bi-Amp 1-4 amplifier (from Phonosophie, £6,950), a two-part phono stage (Attwood's Concert Stage, £695 and Stage Power, £795), and speakers from Wilson Benesch (a pair of Vectors, £8,095 and a Torus sub, £6,420). That's a near-£30,000 system right there.

The Akurate goes one up on other turntables in its bracket, in that it has its own power supply, the Lingo, and it plays at both 33 1/3 and 45 RPM (the Majik needs an adaptor to take it up to 45). Speaking of which, the speed operation is very cool on the Akurate – you get both speeds off the one button. Press once for 33 RPM, press and hold for 45 RPM and watch the red operation light switch to green.

Unlike the more entry-level Majik, which has an aluminium sub-chassis with mounting for a laminate armboard, this deck has its own custom 'Kore' aluminium sub-chassis bonded to a "machined from solid aluminium" armboard. Sitting above it is the baseboard, and what strikes you is the suspension. Linn has named it 'Trampolin': it really is incredibly bouncy like a trampoline and provides almost complete isolation from outside forces or movement. There are five wood options for the plinth: oak, cherry, black ash, rosenut and walnut. And, for our money, the darker the wood the better, to show off your records and to show just how classy a system this is.

There are two important elements to note which added to our anticipation as to how vinyl might sound on this deck: the aluminium/steel tonearm (Linn's Akito) and the Linn Krystal cartridge. Both are included with an Akurate, but the Krystal is also available separately for £1,190 and the Akito for £1,550.

ALL HANDS SONDEK

First off, we tested the Sondek deck with a very well-worn copy of David Bowie's *Hunky Dory*, kicking off with *Changes* from the start of Side One. When I say worn, quite large chunks of the groove were either missing or damaged, but the needle was not thrown once. Come the chorus of *Changes*, incredibly, the crackles gathered since 1971 were almost completely inaudible. The toms jumped out, and the delightful middle eight sounded utterly lifelike. *Hunky Dory* wasn't a wall of sound anymore. Instead, it sounded like a quartet playing live right in front of me. Or a quintet, when you add Bowie's self-played, delicate little saxophone solo from the closing bars, which I'd never heard sound so rich.

Next up, a near-mint condition original pressing of Talk Talk's magnum opus, *The Colour Of Spring*. Starting at the beginning, *Happiness Is Easy* was brought almost completely back to life, compared to the muddy and/or flimsy CD reissues this album has endured over the years. The snares were almost aggressively powerful, and subtle stereo separations became noticeable for the very first time. It also became possible to discern what was keyboard-based in the mix versus what was coming from acoustic instruments.

That's an additional layer of subtle separation I wasn't expecting to get, but which this Sondek delivered faultlessly. Claves, fills and rolls in the rhythm track sounded new to me, to the point that the combination of Danny Thompson's acoustic bass and the school choir in *Happiness* became an almost threatening combination.

Is this the dream turntable? Yes, quite possibly. In fact, we now regret awarding 33 out of 33 1/3 to Wilson Benesch's Circle 25 last issue, as this is even better, making that in hindsight feel more like a 28. Of course, if you have £30,000 to spend on a hi-fi, I'd like to think your time spent listening to music would be torn between this and a streaming system in your pad in the Hollywood hills, and personal performances from Beyoncé on your yacht in St Lucia. But if ever any of us found ourselves in such a position, surely our first love would still be vinyl. And when you came off the beach and your attention turned to 7"s and 12"s, this would almost certainly be the turntable you would use. ●

VERDICT

PROS

TRAMPOLIN SUSPENSION

AKITO TONEARM

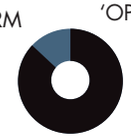
KRYSTAL CARTRIDGE

THE SOUND!

CONS

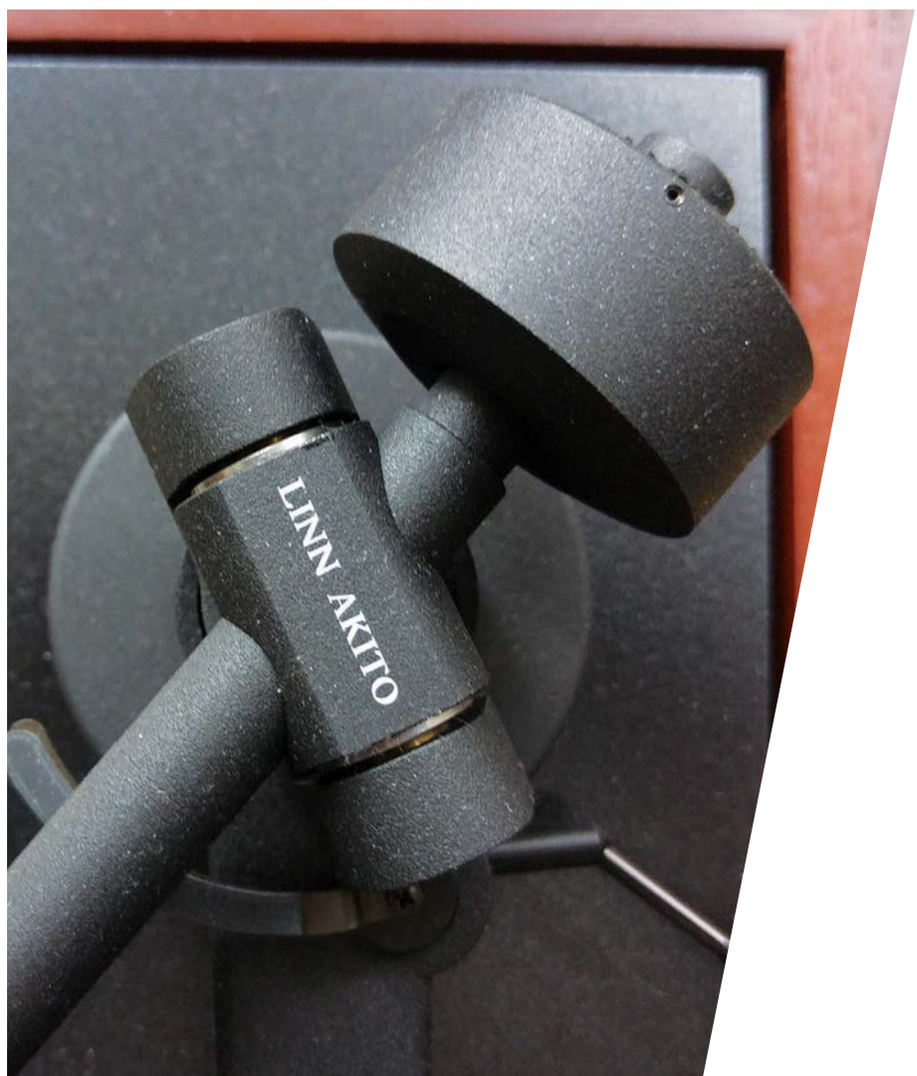
LINN'S RATHER COMPLEX MODULAR AND 'OPTIONAL EXTRA' APPROACH

THE PRICE, OF COURSE, IS A KEY FACTOR...



SCORE

31/33 1/3



AKG K872

MASTER REFERENCE HEADPHONES

£1,200 *www.soundtech.co.uk*

Andy Jones enjoys a masterful set of headphones, but they come at a price…

When a company charges four figures for a set of headphones, you can bet your bottom thousand dollars they'll have the word 'reference' in the name – it makes them sound like some kind of standard, to therefore justify what you're paying the cash for. AKG's K872s go one better by adding the word 'Master' – as if you are in any doubt about their quality, having just witnessed the (street) price tag of £1,200.

The K872s are the closed-back version of the K812s, their open-back older brother, and have been around a while – and become my headphones of choice. I'm therefore lucky enough to be able to test them side by side.

An open-back set of headphones is designed to offer a more immersive 'live' experience, very often with a wider soundstage because that sound is 'allowed out' – the headphones don't keep the sound close to your head, nor do they stop much external sound getting in. If you want to be aware of what's going on around you – and not get run over while out and about – an open-back set will suit. Closed back means outside sound is reduced, but detail in the music is increased.

OPEN AND CLOSED

You'd think closed-back headphones would be the audiophile's choice. Yet there are many, myself included, who prefer the open-back, more natural and wider sound, particularly for acoustic and live recordings.

The K872s are almost identical to their older brothers but, as they're closed, have metal caps to keep the sound in, rather than the mesh used in the open design. Everything else is the same, including – I am particularly happy to say – the comfort levels. The 872s have that lightweight, 'almost as if they are not there' appeal, but fit effortlessly and securely. The first thing you notice when putting them on is that isolation – they really do erase your surroundings and focus on the music.

GIVE A DOG A 'PHONE

Technically, the drivers come in at 53mm, which is huge for headphones of this type, and the frequency response is an almost-ridiculous 5Hz to 54kHz, so once you've finished listening with them, give them to your dog to try. On listening, that frequency response brings a definite focus to parts of the music. Combined with the isolation, you feel you can become totally immersed. On Talk Talk's masterpiece, *Spirit Of Eden*, the swirling organic backdrop enclosed me like an aural fog, while Mark Hollis was almost breathing in my face. Basslines that I've rarely pinpointed as sharply before were present. This was also evidenced on the album *Leftism*. Leftfield's classic was made for 'phones such as these and every detail above the bass throb could be picked out, sliced up and reinserted.

And I guess that is the point. These are pro 'phones at a pro price, made for surgical audio listening. Like the 812s, they have a perfectly flat response with no colour anywhere, so mix engineers can home in on the detail. Consequently, audiophiles love headphones such as these because they want to hear songs as they were meant to be heard.

The 872s deliver, then, but there's one fly in the ointment: the 812s sound better. Not better as in 'more accurate' – there's no doubting the pristine excellence of both – but the 812s just sound more alive, more vibey and as if you are there – not just with the band, but *in* the band. So I'd choose the 872s for mixing music, but the 812s for enjoying it, especially for the analogue, uncompressed tones of vinyl. Maybe that open-versus-closed debate can finally be ended. Closed for making music, open for listening to it. ●

VERDICT

PROS

VERY COMFORTABLE

INCREDIBLE SOUND

YOU WILL HEAR THINGS YOU HAVEN'T HEARD BEFORE

GOOD ISOLATION

CONS

YOU COULD GET YOURSELF A NEW HI-FI SETUP FOR THE PRICE

THE EXISTENCE OF AKG'S 812S

SCORE

28/33⅓

YAMAHA
HPH-MT5
INEXPENSIVE MONITORING HEADPHONES

£89 *www.yamahaproaudio.com*

Andy Jones discovers that everything in headphones can actually be black and white…

Yamaha is well known for its accurate speakers, and its new HPH headphone range has been designed for the same sonic detail, as well as offering a lively listening experience. There are three models in the range: the 8s, which retail for £170; the 7s, which cost £135; and these, the 5s, which, at a retail price of just £89, certainly sit at the other end of the price extreme compared to the AKGs also on test this issue. However, in comparison, they stack up surprisingly well…

At just 250g, the MT5s are as light as headphones can be – any lighter and you'd be pulling them back down to you with the supplied three-metre cable (while common, I find the length of these cables a little excessive – but then, I am prone to cable entanglement issues).

After testing the AKGs, these far cheaper 'phones were always bound to fall down in some areas in such close proximity. The first stumble is the fairly plasticky finish, which is accentuated by the white version of the headphones we had in for testing – the MT5s come in black, too, which does look a little more 'pro'. The earpieces also tend to move around a little too much when you're not wearing them, as they are designed to slip easily into that one-ear mode preferred by DJs.

…AND RELAX

This is not a problem once you put them on, though. The headband takes only a little adjusting and keeps the headphones very secure once you've chosen your optimum size setting.

On wearing them, you're struck immediately by the isolation. As closed-back headphones, they offer a great amount of noise cancelling without the need for the electronic jiggery pokery that comes with headphones from the likes of Bose – these do it by just putting a big earpiece and piece of plastic between your ears and the outside world, and it works. That (lack of) weight also means the MT5s can be worn for long periods without discomfort – ideal for lying down and enjoying the music, and enjoy it you will.

FEEL THE HEAT

Sound-wise, the MT5s deliver one or two surprises. The 'phones have a pretty average frequency response of 20Hz to 20kHz, but have a big sound, and one that certainly doesn't sound like £89. It's bold and brash, in your face and very deep, but it's fair to say that it's also a coloured sound – you certainly don't get a vibe like this from reference 'phones that have a completely flat response. These MT5s have been enhanced, but not necessarily in a bad way – it's a response that seems to heighten some of the best bits of your source material. Mids and highs are as clear and crisp as you like, so vocals, guitars and percussion shine through on our more band-based reference material (The The, Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree).

On dance music, though, the bass accentuation delivers a little too much clout. With a genre that perhaps relies a little too much on bass frequencies, the slight colouring the MT5s offer in the low end creates a little too much throb on more electronic music. It's a shame, because the general enjoyment you get from them makes you want to listen to more and more music, but on vinyl and with dance music, there's almost too much warmth – or should I say 'heat'? It's nothing that a judicious EQ tweak or two won't remedy, though.

Overall, these are headphones with a fantastic soundstage, great immersion and isolation, and they have a vibe that puts a smile on your face. If you like your deep dance and heavy bass, you may want to audition before buying, but for music other than electronica, they're a steal. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
LIGHTWEIGHT	BLACK MAY APPEAL MORE THAN WHITE
COMFORTABLE	BASS IS A LITTLE TOO MUCH ON SOME GENRES
LOW PRICE	
GREAT ISOLATION	

SCORE
25/33⅓

SPEAKER SETUP

Now you've invested your hard-earned money in hi-fi equipment, it's time to position it to get the best possible sound. **Huw Price** gets the measuring tape out…

No doubt about it, buying hi-fi equipment is fun and exciting. There are magazine articles to peruse, forum discussions to read, 'best buy' tables to consult and maybe even auditions at hi-fi dealers to arrange. However, the inconvenient truth is that you may not be getting full value for money if you don't understand how to set up your system.

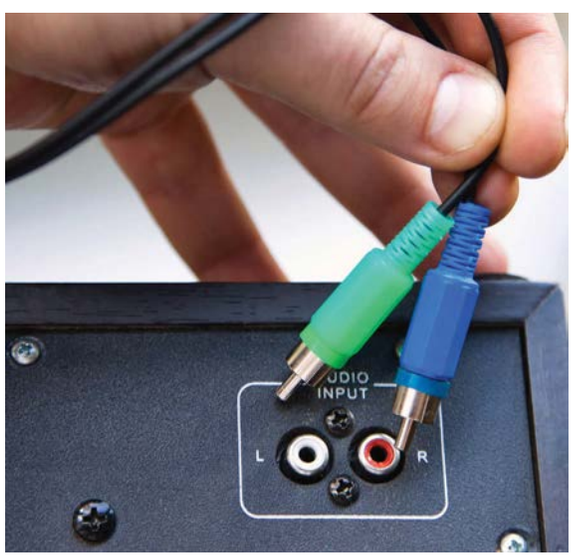
We could debate the pro and cons of shelving, interconnect cables and power conditioners ad infinitum (and in future issues, we most probably will) – but the successful implementation of any hi-fi system is, in the main, determined by speaker placement.

Just picture an owner proudly showing off exotic amps and a turntable that looks as if it belongs on a spaceship, with finger-thick cables leading to speakers sitting forlornly behind the sofa on deep-pile carpet. Does that sound familiar? Or perhaps even worse, does that sound like you?

When hi-fi reviewers talk about imaging, they mean a lead vocal that appears like an aural hologram dead centre between the speakers. They are referring to individual instruments that occupy discernible positions on the left/right stereo spectrum and a sense of audio space that has front-and-back depth. Systems designed to sound decent regardless of listening position are all well and good for pubs and restaurants, but at its essence, the experience of high-fidelity audio is about creating a three-dimensional sense of realism.

You simply cannot experience that sense of realism without optimising your speaker positioning and, quite frankly, you'd be better off listening through headphones.

So this month, we'll be discussing stereo speaker positioning and, since the fundamentals apply regardless of how much money has been spent on the system in question, our suggestions can be applied by and benefit any listener.



All images iStock

LOCATION, LOCATION

This is perhaps the thorniest issue, because partners and family members might have different opinions about designing a room around a hi-fi system, rather than vice versa. After all, we're generally talking about living rooms rather than dedicated listening rooms. We'll proceed on the basis of a favourably negotiated settlement.

Some prefer to fire speakers down the length of a room rather than across its width, but speaker location should really be determined by the primary listening position. Assuming it's your sofa, you should picture your listening spot as one point of an equilateral triangle and position the speakers at the other points, so that each is exactly the same distance away from you.

If your situation doesn't allow for an equilateral triangle and the speakers need to be wider or narrower, don't worry, because we'll address that later. Also, ensure that nothing is placed in between your speakers and your listening spot, and

avoid placing the speakers in corners or closer than 30cm or so to a rear or side wall. Placing speakers on shelves or the top of furniture is never a good idea, but if forced to do so, bring the speakers to the edge – so you can avoid sound waves reflecting from the top surface.

HEIGHT MATTERS

High-frequency information is directional, so the best results are achieved when the tweeters are more or less level with your ears. If you have floor-standing speakers, they may be optimised for height already, but if you place 'bookshelf'-style speakers on the floor, the tweeters will end up firing at your knees.

The solution is to buy a pair of speaker stands, with fairly decent ones available from around £100 per pair but, as with all things hi-fi, the sky's the limit. Ideally, the stands will be non-resonant and that means they will be quite weighty.

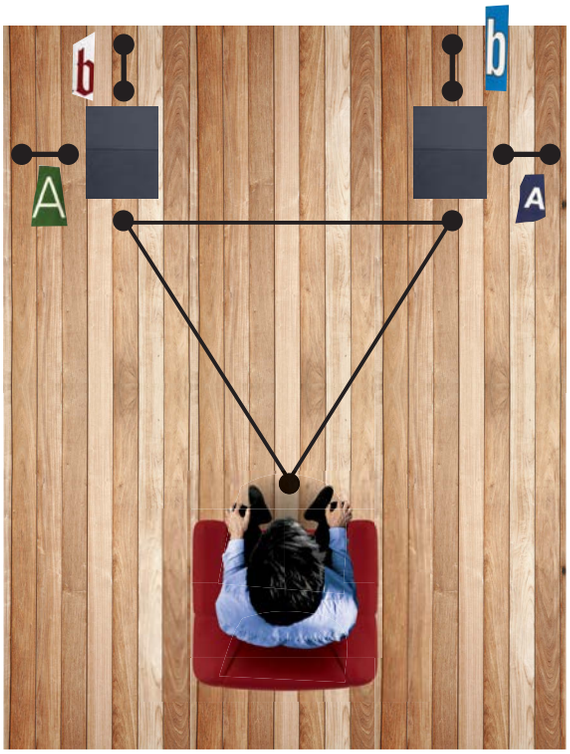
TO AVOID SPLASHING OUT ON SPEAKER STANDS, TRY USING DENSE CONCRETE BLOCKS FROM A BUILDER'S MERCHANT – YOU MAY BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED

To determine optimal stand height, measure the height of your ears from the floor in your listening spot, then measure the distance between the floor and your tweeter and subtract the latter measurement from the former.

If you don't want to splash out on speaker stands, you can try using dense concrete blocks from a builder's merchant – and you may well be pleasantly surprised with the results. You can even stack them to achieve the necessary height, but take care to avoid having the blocks scratch the surfaces of your floor and speakers.

SOLID SOUNDS

Floorboards, shelves and joists can resonate, which can skew bass response and waste acoustic energy. Stray vibrations can also annoy your neighbours and cause havoc with turntables. So a solid and stable base for your speaker ensures that the energy from your drive units is turned into sound waves rather than leeching away into the floor or setting the speakers in motion.



BASIC SPEAKER POSITIONING
Begin by setting up the speakers in an equilateral triangle, where the distance between the speakers is the same as the distance between the speakers and the listening position – and with both speakers situated at equal distances from rear and side walls

TWEETER LEVEL
It's essential for the tweeters to be more or less level with the listener's ear, which may require the use of improvised platforms, or dedicated speaker stands

Some speaker stands are designed for filling with rice, dry sand or other materials to dampen resonance and inhibit vibration transfer. To further minimise unwanted energy transfer, it's usual to minimise physical contact between the speaker and the surface it's placed on.

Speaker spikes are commonly used by many hi-fi enthusiasts because they reduce physical contact to an absolute minimum. Spikes can be placed under floor-standing speakers or speaker stands. You may even place the spikes between the speaker and the stand, too, and they can be found quite cheaply.

Spikes are a virtually essential addition if your plan is to use floor-standing speakers or stands in a carpeted room, to prevent them from rocking back and forth. With spikes on wood or laminate floors, you'll also need to buy some floor protectors to avoid making unwanted holes and scratches.

Some people prefer ceramic cones between speakers and stands, but opinions on their efficacy differ.

RUBBER AND FOAM

Some tests demonstrate that plain rubber feet are more efficient acoustic decouplers – and bisected squash balls make for a cheap DIY alternative. Good results may also be obtained using high-density foam or rubber slabs.

IF TRACKS SOUND WIDE, BUT EVERYTHING IS EITHER HARD LEFT OR RIGHT AND THE VOCAL SEEMS VAGUE OR RECESSED, THEN THE SPEAKERS MAY BE TOO FAR APART

Okay, it's finally time to sit down and start listening. At this stage, you're assessing the speaker setup, so choose pieces of music you know well. Begin by focusing on the lead vocal and the width of the stereo image. Ideally, you should get a wide image, with the vocal sounding solid and dead centre.

If tracks sound wide, but everything is either hard left or right and the vocal seems vague or recessed, the speakers may be too far apart. You have two options – either move them closer together, or leave them in position and toe them inwards towards the centre. If the vocal is strong but the tracks have a narrow or 'bunched up' quality, the speakers may be too close together or toed in too far.

How does the bass sound? If it's sluggish or boomy, matters may be improved by moving the speakers further away from the wall. If the tracks lack weight, you can try doing the opposite. This is actually the fun part and an hour or so of critical listening and careful positioning and repositioning can dramatically improve the sound quality and imaging of any hi-fi system.

Of course, everything we've discussed here applies only to giving your speakers the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. Treble response, imaging sharpness and bass tightness will also be influenced by the acoustic qualities of your listening room.

In fact, the listening room itself ultimately has a more profound effect on the way a hi-fi system sounds than your cartridge, DAC, interconnects and speaker cable combined. But we'll have to save all that for another time. ●

My favourite vinyl
HUEY MORGAN

The Fun Lovin' Criminal, author, TV personality and BBC 6 Music radio DJ picks six essential slabs of classic wax from his diverse music collection

BIRTH OF THE COOL 1957
MILES DAVIS

"This record kind of defines how jazz is now. Before that, it was all big band, Louis Armstrong kind of stuff, and he charges in with this really great mixture of inspiration and improvisation."

801 LIVE 1976
801

"They were nailing some hard emotions and difficult time signatures, and they only did three gigs. I love a lot of Brian Eno's stuff, but on *801*... they were hammering that shit! There were some cats in that band! It got me into the idea that if you're going to play in a band, you have to play with people who are better than you."

LED ZEPPELIN 1969
LED ZEPPELIN

"That whole record is taking the blues and the spiritual cacophony of what was going on at the time and mixing it together the best any band has ever done... The shit John Paul Jones was doing was monster, Bonham was one of the best drummers ever and Robert Plant could sing the panties off a nun!"

C'EST CHIC 1978
CHIC

"Nile Rodgers is a monster guitar player. He knows his jazz, his blues chops... I hang out with Nile and try to pull his coat on everything he does. You could be like Steve Vai and dick around in a weird minor key, but I didn't listen to Steve Vai on the radio when I was a kid. I wanted to write songs that'd get on the radio."

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED 1967
THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

"I had to jump out of aeroplanes in the Marines and so did Jimi – that's where the similarities end! The way he wrote songs, they were amazing, with bizarre, complex rhythms. The mystery is even more now – you watch YouTube and still don't know what the fuck he was doing!"

LICENSED TO ILL 1986
BEASTIE BOYS

"When I was a kid, I was drawn to hip-hop, but this made a whole load of sense to me. Kerry King, Rick Rubin doing all his horrible distorted stuff... it was a perfect snapshot of the evolution of popular music that made me realise whatever I wanted to do musically, I didn't have any borders to cross, 'cos everything was wide open." ●

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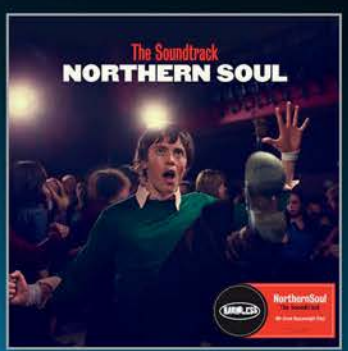

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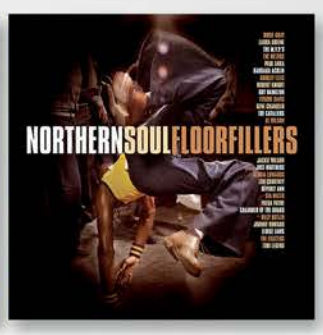

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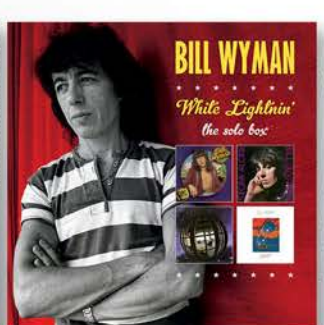

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Pioneer DJ

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